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BROADWAY BILLY'S BIG BOOM.



QUICKER THAN THOUGHT, SEMI-DISGUISED BROADWAY BILLY FIRED.

Broadway Billy's Big Boom;

OR,

Cornering Counterfeit Crooks.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,

AUTHOR OF "BROADWAY BILLY" NOVELS,
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

BILLY IN A DESPERATE FIX.

A WOMAN had been gone from the office but a few minutes when a messenger-boy entered.

He brought a message from Broadway Billy, who took it and proceeded to get at its import without loss of time.

It was about the hour of closing the office for the day, and Happy Harry and Silent Seth were putting things in order preparatory to going home.

"What is it, boss?" inquisitive Harry had to ask.

I am called to the business house of Bigwell & Granson," Billy explained. "You and Seth go on home, and I'll be there later."

"What is up?"

"I don't know; the note does not say. There's a big concern, and more than likely it's a case of robbery. However, I'll drop around and see; I'll let you boys know when I get home."

And so, leaving them to close up the office, Billy set out with the messenger for the place named.

The boy wore a cap with the badge "B&G" on it, proving that he was an employee of the firm.

He was a freckled youth in his early teens, and not very prepossessing.

"Do you know what's wanted of me?" Billy asked.

"No, sir," the answer. "Boss said you were to come in by the alleyway, and ask for him at Door Four."

"Which boss was that?"

"Mr. Bigwell."

The store of Bigwell & Granson occupied nearly a whole block, and had entrances on three streets—or more properly two streets and an alley; the latter being in the rear of the immense building.

When they came to the store the messenger stopped and pointed down the side street, indicating the way to the alley, and Billy passed on and turned into the narrow way, never once suspecting that all was not right and that he was walking into a trap.

It was late in the day and this alley was deserted, and he had gone but a few steps from the corner when he was suddenly set upon by two men.

The two men had run against him with full force, carrying him almost off his feet, and he was hustled across the alley and thrust through an open doorway, where yet a third man laid hold of him.

Billy struggled with all his might, but the odds were against him, and he was speedily overcome.

The little fracas had been "short, sharp and decisive."

"Your race is run, Broadway Billy," one of his captors hissed in his ears. "The jig is up. This time you have undertaken a job that's long odds too hefty for you, and your name is Dennis—you are our chowder!"

Broadway Billy was amazed at this.

He had no case whatever on hand at the time, and these fellows, whoever they were, were entirely mistaken if they thought he had been after them.

He was now aware that it had been a well-laid scheme, and realized that he was in the toils, helplessly. The door had been closed quickly, and the place was too dark for him to tell much about it.

"You may know what you are doing," he coolly remarked, "but I doubt it. If you think I have been after you, you are mistaken; I don't know anything about you, or who you are. I'll be obliged to you if you will throw a little light upon the matter before you go any further."

No reply was made to this, and before his eyes could become accustomed to the darkness of the place he was dragged away and down a flight of stairs into a basement, or cellar, which had no savory smell.

Fortunately—or so he considered it—he knew where he was; the building was the one immediately in the rear of the Bigwell & Granson store, just on the other side of the alley. Should he escape, he would know where to take up the trail to ferret out the rascals.

But, they evidently did not mean to let him escape!

A second door had been closed behind them, the door at the top of the steps, and now total blackness enveloped them.

Two of the men, both powerful fellows, had hold of Billy, and the third, who had come down the stairs behind them, proceeded to make a light, after a short delay.

When the darkness was dispelled, Billy saw that the men had become masked in that brief time.

The place was a cheerless one, and rats scampered for their holes in every direction, some of them as big as cats, apparently. It was a sight to strike a chill to the stoutest heart.

"What do you think of it?" asked the man who had spoken before. "Do you think they'll be able to get a square meal off your bones? We're going to give them a feast, anyhow, and I'll bet in less than twenty-four hours your bones will be as clean as though you had been boiled in a soap-vat. Ha, ha, ha!"

Broadway Billy felt a creepy sensation, in spite of his steel-like nerve.

Not a muscle of his face betrayed it, however, and he was apparently as cool and unmoved as though sitting in his office.

"That will be rough on the rats," he said, simply. "I'm pretty tough, and I won't answer for the condition of their teeth when they get through with me. Before the feast begins, however, I would like to know why this is thus. What is your object in seeking to put me out of the way in this fashion? The way things look, your telling me can make little difference."

"Ha, ha, ha! That's jest the sweetest part of it, young feller! We are going to let you wonder over that while the rats get in their fine work on you, and you will have food for reflection while they have food for their stomachs. Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy was certainly alarmed, and the situation was such as to create dismay in any heart.

Still, he would not let his captors see it.

"It's hardly a fair deal," he complained.

"As I said before, if you think I have been after you, you are mistaken. I don't promise you that I won't be, though, if I get out of here alive. But, you might at least let me know why I am to be disposed of. I am not begging to be let go, or anything of that sort; merely want to know *why* I have got to die."

"And you have been told that; you have taken hold of a job that you can't carry out, and we are going to help you out in good style. Lay hold, boys, and bind him."

The other men proceeded to obey the order.

"You are simply mistaken," Billy denied. "I have not had a case on hand for some days. Consequently, your fears have run away with you."

"Well, it'll be a good thing to put you out of the way, anyhow, then," was the brutal rejoinder, followed with another laugh.

The men had him bound in a few moments,

hands and feet, and they laid him on the ground on his back.

"Now, there you are, right where you're at," said the spokesman. "You will have plenty of company, too, as soon as we go away with the light. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'd like to have another look at your face, just to remember you by," Billy cried in anger. "If I get out of here there will be a day of reckoning between us, and don't you forget it!"

"But, you're not going to get out, so don't count anything on that. And now we'll leave you to your fate. You may shout all you want to, there is no danger of any one hearing you away down here, for this building is vacated—save by the delightful rodents!"

"Well, go," said Billy, "and the curse of Broadway Billy go with you! There will be a day of reckoning for this, I promise you."

"You won't be in it, if there is; and as you're dealing long in futurities, we are willing to take the risk."

The fellow laughed again, at that, and the others with him, and all turned to go.

They ascended the stairs, the door at the top opened and closed, and their prisoner was left in total darkness.

Billy heard them on the floor above for a few minutes, and then their retreating footsteps echoed through his infested prison as they departed in the direction opposite to that from which they had entered.

Scarcely sooner had a distant door been heard to close than there was a mad scampering about over the floor, and the hitherto invincible young detective knew his time of struggle for life had arrived. Bound and helpless, it is no matter of surprise that his courage wavered.

And the mystery of it all—

He could not understand why these men had entrapped him, and their words had only served to make it the more puzzling.

Their intimation that he had undertaken some work against them was groundless, for he had no case whatever on hand at the time, as stated. Nor had he the slightest idea who they were.

But, a sudden thought struck him forcibly: Could it be that this had any connection with the story the woman had told him?—the woman who had gone from his office only a few minutes before the arrival of the messenger with the decoy message that had gotten him into this dilemma?

He thought not; it did not look reasonable; and before he could give it much study the rats claimed his full attention.

CHAPTER II.

HARRY AND SETH HUSTLE.

"CHRISTOPHER COLUMBIA crunchin' crackers an' cheese!" cried Happy Harry, getting out of patience. "We don't care a pickled red herring *who* you are; we want to see the boss."

It was in the establishment of Bigwell & Granson, on the morning after the disappearance of Broadway Billy.

When the boys had been told that Billy had not been at home all night, they were alarmed, and set out at once to trace him up, with the clue they had.

They had come straight to this store and were insisting upon seeing one of the proprietors, but a self-important understrapper was putting himself in their way.

"I can give you any and all information you want," he insisted, "and if you do not choose to make your business known to me you may go away. I am clerk in charge here, so now take your choice—state your business or get out."

Then it was that Harry's stock of patience gave out, and he opened on the fellow in the manner quoted.

"Wh—wh—what!" the man gasped. "You talk like that to *me*? I'd have you to

understand, sir, that I am in authority here, and—"

"You seem to want to be, that's the fact," Harry interrupted. "We didn't come to see the man that sweeps out, though, but the boss himself. We want to see Mr. Bigwell or Mr. Granson, and no more monkeying about it!"

"Here, what's this, what's this?" demanded a gray-haired man who came up just at that moment. "What's the trouble, Pretty-man?"

"Yes, a pretty man, sure enough," cried Harry, disdainfully. "We came here and asked to see the head of the house, and he insisted upon knowing our business; and because we wouldn't tell him he was going to fire us out."

"They were abusive, sir," the fellow lied. "They inquired for the head of the house, that's true, but I thought perhaps I could attend to them just as well without troubling you or Mr. Granson, sir; and that's what I was detaining them for, to learn the nature of their errand."

"Well, I will hear what they have to say."

The old merchant then turned to Harry and Seth, and the self-important fellow stood by to take in what might be said.

"I'll baffle you on that, see if I don't," thought Harry; and addressing himself to the old merchant, he said: "We must see you strictly in private, sir, if you please. Our errand is no ordinary one."

The old man looked at them well, for a moment, and seeing a pair of as keen and fearless faces as it had ever been his pleasure to look upon, granted their request.

"Well, step right this way, young gentlemen," he invited. "We will go into my private office."

He conducted them in, and the door was closed.

"Now," he invited, "what is it?"

"You are Mr. Bigwell?"

"Yes."

"Did you send a messenger to Detective Weston late yesterday afternoon, requesting him to come here?"

"I did not. Why do you ask?"

"Because, sir, a messenger came to the office with a note from you, and Mr. Weston set out to come here with him; but, he has not been seen since, and we are suspicious that something has happened."

"Was this detective called Broadway Billy?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you are the two youths who are associated with him in his work of running down rogues?"

"Yes, sir; we are his drawbacks."

"Anything but drawbacks, I should say, judging by the accounts I have noticed in the papers from time to time. But, that is not to the point you are after. No, I positively did not send for him yesterday, young gentlemen."

"May I ask, then," here put in Silent Seth, "if we can ascertain whether Mr. Granson sent for him? Or, any other person in authority here?"

"I will help you out in that. Come with me and we'll see about it in short order."

The result was what the reader is in position to anticipate; no one in the establishment had sent for the detective, and there was no known reason why one should have been sent for.

When Harry and Seth took leave they were troubled sore.

"What in all creation does it mean, Silent Shadower?" demanded Harry, as they walked slowly away.

"That is what I am trying to guess, Harry," was the response. "It looks to me as though he has been led into a trap of some sort, by somebody; though I hope it isn't so."

"And if he has?"

"We're helpless. We haven't a single clue to work on."

"Well, we'll go to the office, and if there's no word there from him we'd better go and tell the police; don't you think so?"

"Maybe we had. It's hard to tell what to do. It is pretty certain something is wrong, for we both know that messenger said he was from the store of Bigwell & Granson."

"And nobody there sent him."

Harry rattled away till they reached the office.

There was no word from their missing chief, and the two sat down to think it over.

"Hello!" suddenly cried Harry, picking up something from the desk. "I wonder if *this* has got anything to do with it, Silent Seth?"

"What is it?" Seth asked.

"The card of that woman who was here yesterday; went away just before the messenger came, you know."

"It isn't likely; the time was too short, you see. She was no sooner gone than the messenger was here. It doesn't look reasonable, Harry. What was her name again?"

"Vivia Laurence."

"And her address is there?"

"Yes."

"That's good; we may have to call on her. The boss may have stumbled onto something about that case, and is working it up."

"That may be it."

"It was a funny case, Harry. Do you remember all the points of it? Suppose we run them over and get a grip on it while we wait for the boss to be heard from."

"Yes, I can give 'em to you, straight,"

Harry declared, settling back in the office chair at the desk, something after Billy's manner.

"All right, go ahead. You know I wasn't in till she was 'most ready to go, and so didn't hear all she had to say. I forgot to ask you to tell me about it after we went home."

"That's what you miss by having such a still tongue, Seth. You'll never know anything if you don't ask questions. Don't ask any now, though, for I'm going to reel it off to you like a regular phonograph. Ready? Then here goes."

"This young woman's name is Vivia Laurence, as I said. She had a little niece twelve years old, named Zita Burret. This little girl was an orphan, and the young lady aunt was one of her guardians. The child was heir to an immense fortune. The other guardian was a man named Job Heron."

"Now this girl Zita turned up missing not long ago, and for some days nothing was heard of her. She was advertised, and search was made everywhere, and at last her body was found and she was identified by the clothing she had on. It looked as if it had been foul play, for her face was disfigured, and her uncle, one Burk Burret, was arrested on suspicion."

"He cleared himself, though, easy enough, for he hadn't been in the city for a couple of weeks previous, for which he had lots of proof, and he was let go. As he came in for the fortune if the child died, you see there was good reason for arresting him on suspicion. Miss Laurence had some doubts about the body being that of her niece, but all the rest concerned identified it positively, so there was nothing for her to do but agree."

"Now, though, she has come to the boss with a different story, and says she feels double sure the body was *not* that of Zita, and she wants the boss to sift out the mystery and find the missing heiress if she is alive. She believes there is a scheme at work to put the fortune into the hands of

this Burk Burret, and if the mystery isn't worked out in ten days he will come into possession of the whole boodle."

"There you have it, Silent Shadower, all in a lump. If the boss's disappearance hadn't come so quick, a fellow might think this case had somethin' to do with it; but as it is I don't see how it can. What do you think?"

CHAPTER III.

SETH STRIKES THE TRAIL.

BEFORE the Silent Shadower had time to express what he thought about it, the door opened.

They were disappointed, for both looked up hopefully expecting to see their chief in, but the personage who entered was a stranger to them.

He was a young man, about twenty-six years of age perhaps, and had the appearance of being one of the "fly" young gentlemen of the town. The stamp of the Bowery was upon him.

"Mornin'!" he greeted familiarly.

The boys responded, then giving the man a chance to state his business.

"This is the office of Mr. Weston, I take it?" he said. "You are his young helpers, I suppose."

"You strike it about right, sir," acknowledged Harry. "Did you want to see the boss? He hasn't got around yet, but you can leave word and we'll tell him."

"Fact of the matter is, I have come here on an errand from him. Wanted to be sure before I spoke out, you see. He wants you fellows to shut up shop and come at once to No. — street."

Silent Seth rose and stepped into an adjoining apartment, moving leisurely, Harry taking no notice of his action but continuing the talk with the stranger without a break.

"The boss has sent for us?" he questioned. "That's rather strange. Do you know what's up, or what is wanted?"

"There has been a crime committed, and he has taken hold of the matter. He wants you to come and take a hand in it with him, I suppose. I'm a reporter, and he asked me to drop in and tell you."

"What's the crime?"

"It is a murder. But, I have no time to stop and talk with you; I have done what I was asked to do, and you can go or not, just as you please; that is nothing to me. If you don't go, though, don't lie to your boss and say I didn't step in and tell you."

"Oh! we'll go fast enough, never fear about that!" Harry promised. "We are not in the habit of lying, either. But, say, can't you stop long enough to give us some points of the case?"

"No, no; I'm in a hurry to get to the office. You'll find out all about it when you get there. He wants both of you, understand; said lock the office and come."

"Yes, we'll go, right off. It was the boss himself that asked you to stop, was it?"

"Certainly; who else do you suppose would do it?"

"Don't know; only wanted to be sure of that point. I suppose you brought the password with you?"

"The what?"

"The password."

"What are you talking about? I don't know what you mean."

"Don't, eh? Then that proves on the face of it that you have come here with a lie in your mouth."

The fellow had his hand on the door, ready to go, and at this his face paled and he looked uneasy. It seemed plain enough that Harry had hit him hard in a tender place.

"You—you have the impudence to call me a liar!" he exploded, after a moment of silence. "I've a notion to step there and pull your nose for you. I would do it, too, but I know of a better plan than that; I'll

tell your boss, and I think he'll rake you over for it."

"Yes, I *do* call you a liar," Harry fearlessly emphasized, "and you have so proved yourself. When Broadway Billy sends for us he makes use of a private watchword, so we'll know there is no fake about it. Do you get on to *that*? So, if you didn't bring the countersign with you, we know you are a fraud. Now what do you say?"

The fellow really looked confused and foolish.

"I don't know anything about it," he declared. "I've done what I was asked to do, but it's the last time I'll climb a flight of stairs to deliver a message to anybody. In the excitement I suppose he must have forgotten the word—"

"Broadway Billy don't get excited," Harry interrupted.

"Well, I don't know anything about it; you may go or not, just as you please; I am done with the whole business."

And with that, in a snappy way, the fellow was gone.

Harry smiled broadly, stepping immediately to the door by which Seth had left the room some minutes before.

This he opened, looking in, and, seeing that Seth was absent, smiled more broadly still.

"Christopher, Columbia! but that *was* good!" he exclaimed. "Seth ain't asleep, even if he don't have much to say. The way he worked that little trick was right up in G."

He closed the door and stepped to the window, looking out.

"Yes, there they go," he added, highly elated. "There's the fellow, and Seth is onto him as big as a house, in one of his best disguises. I thought I could hold the chap long enough for Seth to make ready to get out."

It was a clever trick, and had been cleverly worked.

The arrangement was one which Broadway Billy had thought of and adapted to use for this very purpose, and this was the first time it had been called into play.

He had rented the adjoining room, a small one, and had a door cut through into it, and in that room was kept everything that was not a part of, or needed in, the office proper.

Here were the disguises, and a few moments after Seth had disappeared from the office, he stepped out into the hall transformed into a little old man with a white beard and bent back, and the change wrought was perfect. The man, when he left the office, could have no suspicion of the trick.

Seth was waiting for him outside, gazing idly at the display of goods in a near-by window.

He let the fellow get some distance in advance, when he started after him.

Seth's suspicion had been aroused the moment the man mentioned having come from Broadway Billy, and acting promptly upon that suspicion, here was the result; he was shadowing him.

The Silent Shadower had expected he would be piloted straight to the address the fellow had given, but in this he was mistaken. The man did set out in that direction, but changed his course and finally entered a cheap-looking restaurant on another street.

Here he took a seat at a table, and Seth entering a moment later, sat down at another table just behind him.

Each gave an order for something, and before the orders were filled another man came in and sat down beside Seth's suspect and they entered immediately into conversation.

Seth had the keenest of ears, and by straining them a little he could overhear what was said.

"Well, how did it work?" the new-comer asked.

"It didn't work worth a cent," was the

snapped response. "They caught me in the neatest trap you can imagine."

"How was that?"

"Why, it seems that infernal detective never sends them a message by anybody without making use of a signal-word so they'll know for sure it's him, and of course I didn't have the word."

"The deuce you say! Who would have thought of a thing like that?"

"Nobody would. The trick didn't do them any good, though, for I didn't let them get a single point, and they will have something to puzzle their heads over, I'm betting. I played my part of it all right, and now where's my money? I have earned that fair enough."

"I do not say you haven't, do I? Here it is," handing over a sum. "It is too bad we didn't know about that word, then you could have sprung that on them the first shot, saying you had forgotten what it was."

"That's so; but I didn't know about it, and so they had me. Maybe they'll go nosing around the place, anyhow, for a clue, so it will serve our purpose just the same."

"Sure enough; I didn't think about that. They think they are smart, because they are associated with this Broadway Billy, but we'll take some of it out of them before they are aware of it. We have made up our minds to nip their game right in the bud, this time, and we're going to do it."

"Have you made your man come to terms regarding your share in the net profits when the game is won?"

"You bet I have! I put him right down to it close last night, and made him sign a paper. Now I have got him, and he dare not say a word. We can go ahead without fear now."

"That's good; that's what I wanted to see. The way it was, he could dump you overboard if he wanted to, the minute he got his clinch on the good green, and you would not have a leg to stand on. You can thank me for giving you *that* pointer, old man, and you want to be liberal accordingly."

"We'll attend to that when the thing comes to a head. Finish your bite, and we'll get out of here. Miserable hole to keep an appointment in."

"I know it, but it's safe, and that's the important thing. May as well finish what I'm at, for it isn't bad eating even if it is humble fare."

Silent Seth minced with what he was at, trying to make it last till they got up to go, and in that he succeeded, following them when they took leave, keeping at a safe distance.

The two men did not go far together, but presently stopped for a moment's talk, when they parted.

It took Seth but a moment to decide which to follow. The man to whom his first suspect had come to report, and by whom he had been paid, was the one promising most, so he followed him.

Doing this, he was taken straight to the house into which it had evidently been the plan to entrap him and Harry.

Here the man entered, letting himself in with a key, for the house had the appearance of being vacant.

Seth stopped a little distance away, looking at the house, wondering if Broadway Billy could be there and trying to think of some means for finding out.

He had not long to wait for something to turn up, for he had been there only a little time when the door opened again and three men came out—the one he had followed and two others.

The Silent Shadower took a good look at them while he had so favorable opportunity. One was a low-browed, big-mouthed, murderous-looking fellow with a beardless face. Another was a slim, sharp-nosed and sharp-chinned man with a mustache—a hungry, eager-looking individual. The

last was a tall, good-looking man of fifty, wearing silk hat and side-whiskers. This was the one Seth had already shadowed.

CHAPTER IV.

HAPPY HARRY COMES TO GRIEF.

WHEN Happy Harry had watched Seth and his suspect out of sight he turned back into the office and sat down to think about it.

"Now, then, what's that?" he asked himself. "We have the best of reason, now, to think the boss is in a consarned diffikilty; Seth is out hustling for points; I am here doing nothing."

"I am proud of this, mighty. If I had some brain like the rest of the combination, I might be doing something too; but I was in the closet when brains was dished around and so missed my share. Let's see; can't I hook on somewheres and keep up with the procession?"

He put himself down to hard thinking.

"That's it," he presently exclaimed half aloud; "that's what I'll do. It's the only clue I've got, and I'll have to work it for what it's worth. These are the days of hump and hustle, and the fellow that don't do both don't get there, that's all and I'm anxious to get there. I'll drop around in disguise and take a bird's-eye squint at that house."

This reference was to the house to which the attempt had been made to decoy him and Seth.

He wrote a note for the chief, in the usual office cipher, leaving it on the desk in plain sight, and that done, went into the adjoining room.

When he came forth he was about as perfect a specimen of the raw Irish lad as could be found, and the brogue on his tongue could be anticipated simply by looking at him.

Locking the office, he set forth.

Nimble of leg, he was only a brief time in reaching the place of his destination.

The house was not a very reputable-looking affair, and it was closed in a way to suggest that it was vacant. The neighborhood was not the best, either, being a miserable foreign quarter.

Harry surveyed the house critically.

"So, *that's* the place, is it?" he said to himself. "It looks dark enough for any crime, and I've a notion to think the boss may be in there a prisoner. I've another notion, too, that I'll try to find out whether he is or not. But how shall I go about it?"

While he was debating this point the door opened and the face of an old woman appeared.

She looked straight in his direction at once, then up and down the street, after which she beckoned eagerly for him to come to her.

Harry was puzzled at this.

"Can it be she knows me?" he questioned, "or does my disguise lead her to take me for somebody else? Reckon I'll brave it and go see what the old dame wants, anyhow. It may play into my hands."

This was thought over and settled in a brief moment, and he crossed the street and stopped at the steps.

"Was it mesel' ye was motionin' to, ma'm?" he asked, adapting his speech to his disguise.

"It was to nobody else," the old woman answered. "Come right in."

"And phwy should Oi come in?" Harry demanded, in well-feigned surprise.

"Because the young man what's lookin' for ye said so when he seen ye out of the windy."

"And who is dhe young man, by dhe same token?"

"He is the man what's looking after the murder of me poor boy, killed by a brute of a Eyetalian."

"Which windy is he at, dhat Oi may get a look at him?" Harry insisted.

"Bother take you! Come in or stay out, and it little matters to me which ye do. I'll tell dhe gentleman, and he can come and talk with ye himself. Maybe then ye will believe."

She had opened the door wide while talking, and now stepped back as if to shut it spitefully.

At the same instant the boy detective was caught from behind, just under the arms, by a pair of powerful hands, lifted clear from the ground and rushed into the house in a second.

The door closed immediately, and Harry was a prisoner!

"Landed! like the sucker you are!" cried the big man who had made the capture. "What do ye think about it, sonny?"

"Begorra, it is puzzled Oi am," Harry made answer, acting his part to the very best of his ability. "Fur phwat have yez run me into dhis ranch, Oi would loike to know av yez?"

"May as well drop that lingo talk, for you are in a trap and ye know it. We spotted ye as soon as you came along and took interest in this house, and it was our business to make sure of ye. There's no use your kickin'. Get something to tie him with, Mom Brunner."

"Somethin' is right here," answered the old woman, producing some strong cord from her pocket.

Just then another man put in his appearance, a thin fellow with remarkably sharp nose and chin; wearing a mustache. The first was a big, low-browed, brutal fellow with beardless face.

"Nailed him, did you?" the new-comer remarked.

"Bet your life on't!" the big brute responded. "Here, you tie him while I hold him. No use your squirming, young feller; I've got you."

Harry had tried to struggle out of his grasp, but found it utterly useless to think of doing that.

"Sure this is one of 'em?" the thin man asked, as he proceeded to bind the youthful prisoner's hands, doing it in a way that was intended to make escape impossible for him.

"Yes, he's one of 'em hard and fast enough," was the assurance. "He came and fixed his eyes on the house, and there's no mistake. Now fix his feet in the same way, and we've got him. Then as soon as we get the other we shall be all right. Oh! we are on the winning side!"

"Begorra, Oi would be pl'azed to know phwat yez do be m'aning," cried Harry, in voice of alarm. "Phwat do yez intind doing wid me?"

"It ain't no use your playin' it any longer," the big brute declared. "We are sure of who ye are."

"Be dhe powers av Brian Boru, it looks loike me name was Dinnis!"

"And it is, too; you're our chowder now."

The fellow snatched off the cap Harry had on, with that, together with a wig of bright red hair, and Harry knew that further attempt to deceive was useless now.

"Where is that partner of yours?" the man demanded.

"He's where you'll soon hear from him, that's sure," Harry answered. "He has seen this little trick played on me."

"Do you mean that?"

"You can bet your buckles I do. If he isn't here in ten minutes with a squad of police, it will be funny."

"Maybe you are lying to us. We'll take chances on it for the present, anyhow. Is the dark room all ready for him, Mom Brunner?"

"Yes; bring him right along."

The two men gagged Harry and carried him down the hall, entering a room without a

window, where they deposited him on the floor.

And thus had one of the boy beagles shared the fate of his chief, to a degree, and so early in the game that little or nothing had been accomplished against their foes.

The room in which Harry had been put was a narrow one, not more than four feet wide, but it was of considerable length. It looked more like a narrow passage, the view Harry had had of it while it was open. And it opened out to the hall by a narrow door.

Closing the door upon him, the man and the woman moved away, and the next moment Harry heard the men's voices in a room on the left—that was, further toward the rear of the house.

The distinctness with which their words came to his ears proved the thinness of the wall between.

He rightly guessed that the narrow room was a secret one, so arranged as almost to defy discovery except upon the closest investigation.

"What do you think about it, Hob?" he heard the voice of the thin man ask.

"The sooner we get the other, the better," was the response.

"So I think, for if he has seen us, as this fellow said, there is danger that our game will miscarry after all our trouble."

"We can't do much of anything till we hear from our gentleman," rejoined the big fellow, whose voice was "bigger" than the other's in proportion to their bodily difference.

So they talked on, without touching upon anything of striking moment, until at length the front door was heard to close and other steps sounded in the hall.

The door of the room opened, and the voice of another man joined in the talk, rather excitedly.

"They have outdone us," he announced.

"Who?" demanded the man called Hob.

"The boys, curse them! They fooled Harper, bad!"

"Well, one of them hasn't outdone us, that is sure, for we have nabbed him."

"Ha! that is excellent! Then it turned out as Harp said it might. But, the other is still at large."

"Yes; and he's the only one we have got to fear now. Their boss is done for, this fellow is safe, and as soon as we can get hold of the other the whole thing is in our hands."

Harry listened to these words with heavy heart.

They implied that Broadway Billy had been killed, and the boy had every reason to fear it was so.

"And everything must be done to get hold of him as soon as possible," spoke the new-comer. "Nothing must be left undone. He can be trapped, and in a secret way, too, if we only look alive about it."

"That's what's the matter," muttered the thinner voice of the thin man. "There must nothing stand in our way now. If we fail in this one point the whole thing is up, and no telling how much that fellow has found out, if he really did come here with the one we captured."

"If you suspect that, let's get out of here as soon as possible," urged the new-comer.

"Mom Brunner can deal with anybody who comes to search the house, and they'd never find him in a month. Come on."

They left the room immediately, their voices were heard for a moment in the hall as they talked with the old woman, then the front door was heard to close after them and they were gone; and Happy Harry, bound and gagged as he was, felt utterly hopeless and helpless in his darkened prison.

CHAPTER V.

SILENT SETH SNARED.

As Silent Seth stood watching this house, wondering if it were possible that Broadway

Billy could be a prisoner there, he had never a thought that Happy Harry was in bondage within its walls.

When the men came out he took a good look at them, as stated, and quickly decided what to do as they walked away.

On the one hand he was tempted to stay and investigate the house further, but on the other hand he felt that he ought to follow the men to learn as much about them as he could.

He decided upon the latter course.

The men had gained some distance the start, now, and he could follow without much danger of suspicion.

His disguise was one of the most perfect he had, and one in which he had before won signal success, so he felt that the danger of discovery was slight providing he was careful.

The men did not go far in company, all together, for presently they stopped, after having gone three or four blocks, and the big brutal fellow left the other two, going off in another direction by himself. And for a few moments Seth was undecided which to follow.

He had to decide quickly, and as it was easier to follow one than two, he continued on the track of Hob—as we have heard him called.

The work was simple and plain, the man going straight to a low saloon on a miserable street and entering.

Seth sauntered on, and as he passed, on the other side of the street, looked to note the number, and at the same time he read the name of the proprietor over the door—Hob Feeny.

While looking, a lad made his appearance from the place, at sight of whom the Silent Shadower gave a start.

It was the same freckled boy who had brought the decoy message to the office on the previous day!

Here was something, and Seth felt that he had important work on hand.

The boy paused in the doorway for a moment, and then started off down the street, Seth going after him promptly, determined to interview him at any cost. Here was the chance to get on the track of Broadway Billy!

As soon as they were out of sight from the saloon, Seth caught up with the boy and stopped him.

"My boy, what's your name?" he asked, in such a tone as an old man might use, or as near to what Seth thought it ought to be as he could imitate.

"What's that ter you, old duff?" the boy demanded, pertly.

"Nothing, my little man, nothing; only I wanted to ask you some questions, that is all. How would you like to earn some money? I suppose you know all the streets around here, don't you?"

"Guess I do, boss; where do you want to go?"

"Well, I want to find the street they call Broadway, and then I want to find Number —. Do you think you could guide me there?"

"You bet, if there's sug in it."

"If there's what in it?"

"Sug—short for sugar; sugar means money. See?"

"Oh! Why, yes, there's money in it, of course; that is, I'll pay you for the trouble, of course. Come right on."

The boy complied, evidently glad of the prospect for earning a little spending money.

"What did you say your name is?" Seth asked, as they went along.

"Tip Feeny, sir."

"Oh! then you are Hob Feeny's boy, are you?"

"Yes; do you know my pop?"

"He's a little man, isn't he?"

"Not much he ain't," with pride. "He's

a big feller, and there ain't a man in our ward kin lick him, either."

"Then he must be the man I saw going into the saloon you came out of. That was his name that was over the door. You are right, he isn't very small, Tip."

"That was him, sir."

"Is this Broadway?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then let's us stop a minute and get our wind. Do you work anywheres, Tip?"

"Nixey; I don't have to work, for my dad has got the scads, he has, and I am goin' to learn to keep bar and be a big man like him."

Noble ambition!

"Why, thought you worked for Bigwell & Granson," Seth now pushed the matter.

"Didn't I see you with their badge on your cap yesterday?"

The freckled fellow looked at Seth wonderingly, eyes wide open.

"Where did you see me?" he demanded.

"Didn't I meet you on the street in company with a good-looking man with black eyes?"

"Mebby you did; I dunno."

"Or, maybe it was in the store I saw you."

"Nixey, for I don't work there. That cap was only a fake, that was all. But, come on, if you've got your wind."

"We'll finish this business first," decided Seth. "Now look here, Tip, I want to know where you took Broadway Billy yesterday, and what became of him. Don't try to run, or I'll break every bone in your body."

The boy had paled, so badly that his freckles stood out in bold relief, and he was edging off.

"I don't know what you're talkin' about, boss," he declared. "If you want me to take you to that number, come on; if you don't, say so."

"Well, then, I don't; all I want of you is what I just asked you. Now, you tell me, or I'll hand you over to a policeman and have you run in. Broadway Billy has got to be found, and you have got to find him."

"You'll have to catch me, first, old duff."

And with that the boy darted away as fast as he could go, down the street by which they had just come out upon Broadway.

Even yet he had not penetrated Seth's disguise, and no doubt counted upon running away from him with ease; but he had based his proposition upon an unknown quantity.

Seth sprung after him, and before a block had been covered he had him by the collar.

"Well, the old duff has got you," he cried.

"Now, you tell what you know about that matter, or I'll hurt your feelings for you. I mean it, so don't monkey about it. Where did you take Broadway Billy? or where did you see him last? Speak out."

"I took him to Bigwell & Granson's, of course."

"You did, eh? Who sent you after him? You said that cap was only a fake, and that you didn't work there. Don't try to lie, now."

"Well, I was workin' there then; they sent me from the store."

"That's a lie, right out plain. I have been to the store, and no one there sent for him. Now, you tell the truth, or you'll sleep in the Tombs to-night."

"I—I don't know who sent me; it was a man met me on the street, and he said take that note to Mr. Weston and bring him to that store. And that's what I done, nothin' else."

"Want me to call a policeman, do you?"

"No, no; don't do that; I'll tell you all about it if you won't, honor bright I will."

"Then why don't you?"

"You won't believe me anyhow, even if I do tell true."

"Never fear; I'll know whether you are telling the truth or not. Come, now, unwind yourself."

"What will ye do with me then?"

"I'll let you go, then, if you satisfy me with what you tell."

"Tell you what I'll do."

"What's that?"

"I'll take you to the house where I took him."

"All right, do that. But, how did you get him to go with you, when the note said come to Bigwell & Granson's?"

"Oh, I had more to tell him, when we left the office, you see, and he went along with me all right. Come on, if ye want me to show ye, I'll easy do that. Then you must let me go."

"Lead the way."

So they set out, the freckled boy in the role of guide.

The Silent Shadower tried to get more information out of him as they went along, but the little fellow was sharp and a remarkable liar.

On this account Seth was looking out for him, not knowing what trick he might have in mind, determined that he would not be caught napping, and that the boy should not get away till he had learned what he knew.

What Tip had in view was not to appear, for something turned up that took the responsibility off his hands.

They were getting back into one of the worst quarters of the city, by this time, and suddenly they came face to face with the two men who had come out of the house with Bob Feeny.

Seth saw them first; the next moment he saw them recognize Tip, and from the boy they looked hard at him.

As they passed, the thin man made a grab at Seth's beard, and off it came.

The Silent Shadower sprung back a step, reaching for a weapon with which to defend himself, but the men had him before he could act further.

No persons were near save a lot of brutal-looking Italians and other foreign loungers, and the respectable appearance of the man with the high hat and side-whiskers overawed them, evidently.

"We'll fix you, pickpocket!" the well-dressed man cried. "Out of the way, men, while we drag him to the police!"

Spite of his struggles, Seth was overcome, and was hustled around a corner in a moment, and in the next moment was forced into a house, where the door was shut as quickly as possible.

Tip, the boy, had taken to his heels and started for home, as soon as escape was possible, and here was Seth, in the toils as badly as Happy Harry, with the fate of their chief unknown and altogether uncertain. It looked as though luck was against them this time.

Seth was quickly overcome and bound, the two men seeming quite at home here, and that done, was taken down into a cellar and pitched into a corner much after the manner of a bag of meal, and there left.

Broadway Billy and his boy invincibles were downed at last!

It looked as though their season of usefulness had come to an untimely end.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW BILLY FARED.

AND Broadway Billy, whom we left in a terrible situation, in total darkness, bound hands and feet, and with a hundred hungry rats ready to attack him:—what of him?

No sooner had the light been removed from the foul-smelling cellar, as stated, than the rodents were heard scampering over the floor in great numbers, and it was only a moment later when Billy felt them running over his person.

The young prince of Metropolitan detectives had been in many a tight place in his time, but never in all his experience, he thought now, had he been in a more deadly, dangerous dilemma. It would have been

bad enough, even with the use of his limbs, but bound as he was—

No wonder he felt the creepy sensation mentioned, or that a chill for a moment seized him.

All this quickly passed, however, and shutting his teeth hard Billy faced the ordeal as he had faced many another, with all the steel of his nature at high tension nerved to face death if it came to that.

When the rats were thick about him, and when he expected their attack, then he gave vent to a shrill whistle, followed by a sharp hiss, and away they scampered, giving him a little respite. But well he knew this ruse would not long serve the purpose; they would become bolder presently.

His captors had not feared that his cries for help could be heard, and hence had left him ungagged, and the prisoner himself felt that they had been perfectly safe in so doing.

In a few minutes the rats were back around him again, as thick as before, and the bolder ones were running over him.

This time Billy gave a yell and rolled over quickly, and two at least came to an untimely end.

Billy followed up his cry with a louder one for help.

His voice seemed to be stifled in that place, however, as in truth it was, and he doubted whether it even reached to the floor above.

The hero of a hundred desperate straits was certainly in a bad fix this time, and it really looked as though there could be no way of escape, but still he did not give up.

"This beats them all, I believe," he said to himself. "But, while there is life there is hope. There's no use giving up as long as I can wiggle, and there is a good deal of wiggle left in me yet. Sorry I didn't tell one of the boys to follow; but, who would have dreamed of this?"

He thought hard.

How to get out—that was the question.

Ere long the rodents were at him again, evidently famished and eager to make a feast.

Billy allowed them to gather as thickly as he dared, and then, with another yell, rolled over as before, crushing two or three more and causing another general scamper.

This time, however, another danger made itself known, for in the act of turning Billy rolled upon something that gave him a painful hurt in the side, and moving so as to feel with his fingers he found it to be a part of a broken bottle with jagged points.

"Whew!" Billy whistled upon making the discovery. "This danger is as bad as the danger from the rats. If this had caught me on the wrist and severed an artery, I would have been done for sure enough—Ha! the very idea! Can't I manage to cut these cords on the broken glass? Never say die, Broadway Billy! You're good for another round or two!"

And hope filled his breast immediately.

With extreme caution he moved so as to bring his bound wrists over the edges of the glass, and at once began rubbing the cords carefully over the sharp notches.

He had reason to believe it was going to be slow work, and he had barely begun operations when the rats were around him again, more venturesome than ever, and a sharp yell did no more than to drive them off to a little distance. They were soon at him again.

It might have been Broadway Billy's last adventure, but fortunately the jagged glass had an edge like a razor, and contrary to his expectations the cords gave way, after only a moment's effort, and his hands were freed!

"Thank God!" Billy reverently exclaimed.

"Now we'll see who will get the worst of it, I or these accursed rats!" and snatch-

ing a revolver from his pocket he fired a shot.

This was something new, and the rats were gone at once, not a sound being heard after their terrific scamper died out.

"That's medicine of a different sort," Billy mused, laughing to himself. "I guess they don't like it. Now, to free my feet, and I'll have the freedom of the den I'm in anyhow."

It was but the work of a moment to put away the revolver, draw his knife and sever the bonds that held his feet, and he was free!

"You will probably hear from Broadway Billy again, now," he grated, thinking of his captors.

He had matches, and striking one, took a survey of his prison.

It was a dismal hole indeed, low and frowning and foul-smelling, little more than a hole in the ground.

The supports of the building were at regular intervals on every hand, but besides these the place contained nothing save a lot of old rubbish. It had evidently been used as a handy dump place for refuse.

From every crevice and cranny the bright eyes of the rats were shining, and again did Billy shudder as he thought of the fate he had come so near to meeting.

While the match burned he moved toward the stairs leading to the floor above, and there a welcome sight greeted him.

This was a gas pipe, with a burner near the foot of the steps.

The match went out, just then, but another was immediately lighted, and turning on the gas, Billy soon had all the light he could wish for.

"Now, this is more cheerful," he congratulated himself. "There's a prospect for life and liberty once more. And there will come a day of reckoning, the same as I promised them."

His first effort was made against the door at the top of the stairs, but, he found it hopelessly fastened.

It was a heavy door, and the lock was a massive affair, heavily bolted on.

There was no escape in that direction.

Descending again, he made the circuit of the place, but nothing but solid wall met his eye anywhere.

Not a hole or window was to be seen, and now he could understand why his captors had been so willing to leave him ungagged. His loudest cries for help would not be heard.

"Sweet pertaters!" he gave way to his old-time favorite exclamation. "This is a death-trap, sure enough, and their intention was murder and nothing short of it when they left me here with the rats. How in the name of merry misery am I going to get out?"

The idea came to him that by firing his revolver he might draw attention to the place, but on second thought he saw the chances were against it.

That, too, would be to waste something more precious than gold—his bullets, for he could not tell how soon he might have urgent need for every shot his brace of weapons contained.

No; that was not to be thought of. He must find a way out, or remain until some one came.

Should any one come, he could pretend to be still bound till the person had come within reach, when he would give him a surprise such as he would be likely to remember.

This was mere speculation, however. It did not answer the present purpose. He could not sit idle and wait for such a thing to come about.

He remembered the plan of the floor above, and knew no turn had been made before descending the stairs after he had been brought in from the alley, and hence the stairs indicated the front and rear of the building.

Whether or not the building extended

through to the next street, was an open question. Judging by the length of the cellar, he concluded that it did not. Still, it might, for the building of Bigwell & Granson, in the other direction, was a long one.

Once more he made the circuit of the wall, taking particular note of it in every part, and presently, at a point where the light was dim, being far away from the burning gas, and in the shadow of some of the supports, he came upon a place that had the appearance of being newer than the surrounding portions. It looked as though it had been patched.

"I wish I could carry that gaslight around with me," Billy mused. "If I had it here I could tell something about this spot. It looks to me as if a hole had been filled in not long ago, for the stones and mortar both have a new look. Wait; I'll see if I can't make a torch out of some of this old rubbish. Necessity is the mother of Invention, and when a fellow puts his wits at work he can generally accomplish 'most anything'."

Hunting around, he presently found a piece of a box, and with his knife split one end in small portions to make it answer the purpose.

This done, he lighted it at the gas flame, and hastened back to the place under investigation.

His guess had been correct; it was a freshly-patched spot.

"What does it mean?" he questioned. "Maybe there has been a hole in the wall into the next building, if there is any next, and if so it will be a good way for me to get out, if I can tear down the wall. William, we'll try it, anyhow, and see what we can do. No use standing idle, and this is about the most likely spot to tackle. But, where's the tools? A fellow can't tear down stone walls with his nails, that's sure."

He went on searching about, while his thoughts ran thus, and presently made another discovery that was decidedly pleasing. It seemed as if everything was playing into his hands.

In one corner, half buried in the dirt and rubbish, he found a pick, all dusty and rusty, but still in serviceable condition!

Now, armed with this he went back, stuck his torch in the ground, and made an attack upon the wall that caused the sparks and splinters to fly.

His aim was at the mortar between the stones here and there, and as often as the pick point hit it fairly he brought out a piece. Presently a stone came out, then another, and the prisoner was greatly elated at his success. Suddenly, however, the patch in the wall gave way, falling outward, and the ground dropping from beneath the feet of the astonished detective, he was carried down in the general wreck!

CHAPTER VII.

MISS LAURENCE'S LOVERS.

VIVIA LAURENCE was a charming little lady of twenty-four, unmarried!

Something concerning her has been made known, briefly, in the preceding pages, and we may now introduce her further.

She had some wealth, and lived in a quiet way with her widowed mother on one of the retired and quiet streets of the city. Her father had been one of the members of the firm of Bigwell & Granson.

Her only sister had married a very wealthy man, but died about four years after the birth of their only child, a little girl named Zita, whom Vivian took under her care. And the father dying a few years later, Vivian was made one of the child's guardians.

The other guardian was, as already stated, one Job Heron, who had been an intimate friend to Telford Burret, the child's father. This man Heron was then accounted honest and honorable, but somehow Vivian Laurence had never been able to bring herself to trust

him fully. A certain something in his manner had always been repelling to her, though she could not have described what it was.

The events concerning the loss and death of Zita Burret have been set forth, and need not be repeated.

Miss Laurence had at least one friend whom she could trust, besides her accepted lover, and this friend was Jonas Bigwell, of Bigwell & Granson. He and her father had been fast friends.

The lover mentioned was one Edward Franklin, a worthy young business man of the city. He was known to Mr. Bigwell, favorably. Franklin had, however, a rival, in the persons of Amson Prettyman, a foreman on one of the floors of the Bigwell & Granson establishment.

It was early afternoon on the day following the disappearance of Broadway Billy—the same day on which Happy Harry and Silent Seth had come to grief in the manner shown, that Jonas Bigwell called at the home of Mrs. Laurence and asked for Vivian, and was quickly admitted into her presence in a neat little sitting-room where the mother and daughter were together.

"I've got something to make known to you, Vivian," the old merchant abruptly announced.

"Yes? What is it, Mr. Bigwell? Nothing in the way of bad news, I hope. I will not try to anticipate, however."

"I don't know whether it's bad or not, my dear, but I think it is something which will interest you. Did you employ that detective?"

"Yes, sir; I went to him yesterday afternoon."

"And you mentioned it to no one?"

"No one. That is to say, only you and mamma know about it, besides Edward. I tell him everything, of course."

"Well, this morning the detective's two boys came to my place and wanted to see me, and when I gave them an interview they said their employer was missing and they had come to find him."

"That was strange; why did they come to you?"

Mr. Bigwell explained the matter as it is known to the reader, as far as he had knowledge.

"Why, it is peculiar, Mr. Bigwell, is it not? Who do you suppose can have deceived him so? And what has happened to him? Really, I feel anxious about the man; he was a real gentleman."

"It is a puzzle, my child, a puzzle. I didn't think much about it at first, but the more I turned it over in my mind the more it impressed me, and I thought I would just run around and tell you. Still, I don't suppose it can do you any good to know about it."

"No, I suppose not; but it may do the gentleman some good, if he really is in trouble, for I can go and tell Edward, and if necessary he can inform the police about it."

"That is hardly necessary, Vivian. You see, these boys of his are as keen as razors, and if they do not find their boss they will have the police out."

"Yes, sure enough; I did not think about it."

"And are you still of the same mind regarding the matter you confided in me about?"

"Yes, I am strongly impressed, sir, that I am not mistaken. The more I think about it the more certain I feel that the body was not that of poor little Zita."

"What opinion did the detective express?"

"He did not commit himself, but said he would investigate, and if he found I was right he would try to bring them up with a round turn—that was his expression."

"And no doubt he will, too, unless something has happened to him. I cannot understand why he was sent for to come to our store, when no one there knows a thing about it."

"No, it is very strange."

"Well, I have told you, and so freed my mind in that direction. I remembered it was Broadway Billy you said you would employ, and I thought I'd let you know. If he doesn't turn up, of course your case will be *in statu quo*, as the lawyers put it."

"Yes; and for that reason I'll be anxious to find out about him. I'll see Edward and tell him all about it."

"Why not Mr. Prettyman?"

"Mr. Bigwell! Why will you persist in teasing me about him?"

"Don't you know the poor fellow's heart is ready to break, for love of you? I am afraid you are cruel to him."

"You know you do not think anything of the kind. If he will make a goose of himself, can I help it? I have told him plainly to forget me, that I can never be anything to him."

"Which seems to make him all the more eager, my dear. The fact of the matter is, he has confided in me, and has urged me to speak to you in his favor. That is why I do so, for really I am under some obligation to the fellow; but all the same I cannot but commend your good sense."

"Thanks, sir. Well, you may tell him his case is now entirely hopeless, for I am the promised wife of Edward Franklin."

"Ha! that's the case, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that ought to settle him. I'll tell him, when I go back, and I hope he won't go and hang himself."

"Little fear of that; he's too cowardly. If he has got any sense at all he will take it like a man and never make further mention of it. I'm sure I never encouraged him, anyhow."

Mr. Bigwell held some further talk with the mother and daughter, finally taking his leave.

He had not been gone a great while when another caller was announced.

This time it was Mr. Job Heron.

He was a tall, well-dressed man, wearing a high hat and side-whiskers. His appearance suggested a compromise between a lawyer and a parson.

"The first time I have been able to call since the funeral, Miss Laurence," he said. "I hope I find you well. I have dropped around on a little matter of business even now. Poor hand at making calls of any other sort, you know."

"What is your business, then, Mr. Heron?" the young lady asked.

"Regarding the estate. Mr. Burret has called on me, and as he is to come in for it anyhow he would like to have the papers we hold. I see no reason why they may not be delivered to him, do you? But it shall be just as you say, you know, just as you say."

"Is he not making unseemly haste?"

"Just what I told him; but he says he had arranged to go away, and has had to delay to settle things up. He wants to set out for California as soon as possible, and if he can have the papers it will save him some delay about straightening affairs out. But let it be just as you say. I told him I would be willing, and I'd mention it to you."

"Why did he not come to see me himself?"

"You ask me too much, really. I'll tell you, though, the man is poor and is not as presentable in appearance as you could wish a caller to be."

"Poverty is no crime; he need not be ashamed of that."

"Well, what shall I say to him?"

"You may say that I intend to hold the papers to the very last hour, because I suspect that everything is not as right as it ought to be. It is only a matter of ten days anyhow, or even less, and I guess he can wait that length of time, with the prospect of a million or so in view. Tell him that."

A shadow had come over the face of Mr. Heron.

"All right; I'll tell him just what you say," he promised. "It is nothing to me, you know. Really, though, I don't see where there can be anything wrong in the affair. The courts found nothing, anyhow."

"That is all right, Mr. Heron; but it has never been explained to my satisfaction how poor Zita came to wander from home, and how she came to be in the river in the terrible condition in which she was found. Further, I am not satisfied that it was her body we buried."

At this the shadow on the man's face was displaced by a paleness.

"If I had a single doubt, Miss Laurence," he declared, "I would spend every dollar I possess in trying to get at the truth; but, I cannot doubt. You recognized the clothing, every piece, and your maid and everybody else recognized the body. Oh, no, I see no room to doubt. Still, as you say, that does not explain the mystery of it all, and I am afraid it never will be explained. Well, I'll report your decision, and the man will have to abide by it."

"Yes; and, if at the expiration of the time nothing new has developed, then he will come into the property as a matter of course."

"Then you think something may develop?"

"It is possible."

"Why, Miss Laurence, have you discovered anything to bear out the suspicion you seem to entertain?"

"No, I must admit that I have not, sir; still, I am expecting that something will come to light, if my suspicion is not altogether groundless."

"If everything is not right, I hope it will be plainly shown before the time expires. You know I would never countenance anything wrong in the matter, Miss Laurence, never."

"Assuredly not, Mr. Heron."

He did not tarry long, but made his excuse for going and went.

Half an hour later Vivian Laurence left the house and set forth in the direction of downtown.

The business place of her accepted lover, Edward Franklin, was her destination, and finding him in his office, she laid the matter before him in full, requesting his aid.

This he promised readily enough. He shared her suspicion, and believed the young detective had met with foul play. He would investigate immediately, and if appearances bore out the suspicion, would put the case into the hands of the chief of police for inspection.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER VICTIM.

THAT day Edward Franklin closed his place of business earlier than usual, and took a Broadway car up-town.

Watching the numbers, he finally alighted and entered the building in which the young prince of detectives, Broadway Billy, had his office.

Mounting the stairs, he found the door of the office and tried it, only to discover it locked. Nor was there any notice on the bulletin stating the whereabouts of the proprietor.

He turned to the office of a lawyer, just across the hall.

Going in, he found there a man past middle age, busy with books and papers, who looked up as he entered.

"I suppose you know the detective who occupies the opposite room?" the invader interrogated. "Do you know where he is to-day?"

"Yes, I know him, sir," was the response,

"and I don't know a finer young man in this city, I assure you. I have been wondering where he is, for the office has been closed all day."

"He has two youthful assistants, I believe. Have they not been here to-day, either?"

"That is what makes me think stranger still of it. They were here a few minutes this morning, but have not been back. Still, it's nothing, for they are not infrequently absent."

"If that is the case, why does their absence so impress you this time?" the caller inquired.

"Before I answer that I want to know something about you."

"Well, I am interested in a case this detective has in hand, and I have good reason to fear he has met with foul play."

"Goodness! I hope not! I'll tell you; I am here all the time, every day, and the young man nearly always confides more or less in me, generally giving me an idea where he is going, if expected to be long absent."

"Then he does not use the bulletin?"

"That is another point. They do use that, and there hasn't been a scratch on it to-day."

"Do you think the suspicion is strong enough to warrant us in telling the police about their absence? What do you say about it?"

"If they did not appear to-morrow morning, I certainly expected to do that," was the reply. "From what you say, maybe you had better do it without delay. I would not want to hear of harm coming to that young man."

Franklin took his leave impressed with the importance of notifying the police as soon as possible.

He understood the object of the detective in taking the old lawyer into his confidence—that in case of his disappearance at any time the police would have some clue to start with to find him.

Now, however, nothing of that kind was to be had, and it was all the more suspicious.

In a little time he was at the office of the chief of police.

There he made himself known, stated his business briefly but fully, giving all the points in his possession.

"This may be serious, sir," the chief said. "I will put a man on the case at once and see what can be learned. The suspicion you entertain may not be groundless, and I'll investigate."

And so it was that the police, too, were directed upon the same trail which had proved so disastrous to Happy Harry and Silent Seth.

When he left Headquarters, Mr. Franklin's intention was to call upon his promised wife, to inform her regarding the result of his inquiries, and he set forth in the direction of her home.

He had not gone far, however, when he was accosted by a freckled lad who demanded:

"Say, boss, be you Mister Franklin?"

"That's my name," was the answer, promptly.

"Then here's a writin' for ye," and the lad thrust a note in his hand.

Franklin read it quickly, for it was very brief and to the point, and turning to the bearer, demanded:

"Where did you get this, my boy?"

"Lady in carriage p'inted you out and said hand it to ye," was the ready explanation.

"That so? Which way did the carriage go?"

"Down that way, sir," pointing. "She tried to make you hear, but you never looked, so she scribbled this and sent me after ye on the jump. See?"

"Yes, I see, but I don't understand it. I don't see why she didn't wait for me to join her, even if she did have to send you to

catch me, my lad. It looks somewhat suspicious."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout it, boss. You've got it straight, and I've got the quarter she gev me, so we's all right."

And with that the freckled youth took his departure.

It was no other than Tip Feeny, the decoy!

Franklin stood for some moments staring at the fragment of writing he held in his hand.

It was, as he had said, suspicious;—that Vivia Laurence should send him a note like this, and not wait for him, being in a carriage.

The note ran thus:

"Ed:—

"Called in haste to ——— street. Join me quickly as possible. It must be highly important. VIVIA."

It was evidently in a woman's hand, but it was a mere hasty scribble, showing its having been written in some difficult place. He could not say whether it was or was not Vivia's writing.

"Yes, it's doubly mysterious," he reflected. "She would have merely sent the boy, with a word to call my attention to her carriage. It could have been done while she was writing this. And then, what call has she to go to such a quarter of the city?"

He thrust the note into a pocket, and for a moment stood in deep study.

"I don't understand it," he said to himself, "but I will before I go any further in it. I'll go on to the house, and there'll be able to get the straight truth, no doubt. If Vivia has been called suddenly out, her mother will know all about it, and I'll go posted. But, from the tone of the note, she evidently did not know the nature of the errand she was going on."

He went on his way, making haste.

"Then, who has sent for her?" he questioned. "Ha! maybe it was this young detective. If so, that would account for her great haste, and when the average woman is flurried she gets rattled, which would explain her conduct about the note. Maybe it's all right, after all, and maybe my help will be of some use if I get there quickly. I will go! What can happen to me, anyhow, in broad daylight? Pshaw! it is not likely it can be a trap."

Changing his course to conform to his change of mind, he presently caught a car that would bear him more rapidly toward his destination.

He had his eyes carefully about him as he drew near to the address given, after leaving the car.

It was in a disreputable quarter, and it behooved him to be on his guard.

Presently he turned a corner and came upon the house he was looking for, and the sight of a carriage standing before the door reassured him.

Miss Laurence kept no carriage, but had one at her disposal whenever she had use for it, and at a glance Franklin took this to be the rig he had seen her out with on other occasions.

"I was right, after all," he decided. "It must be the detective who sent for her in haste."

He leaped up the steps and touched the bell.

The door was opened promptly by a not very inviting personage.

"I want to see the lady who came in the carriage," Franklin announced, as a "feeler."

"All right; she's there in the back room, sir," the woman said promptly, indicating a door down the hall.

This door was slightly ajar, and his suspicions allayed, the man stepped quickly forward, pushed the door open, and entered.

The moment he did so, something struck

him on the back of the head, and he was sent headforemost into a corner, where he dropped in a heap, insensible.

"As neat as I ever seen done!" exclaimed a rough, coarse voice, and a villain armed with a piece of lead pipe stepped forth from behind the door and looked at the work he had done.

"It was first-rate," another man agreed. "He walked into the trap as tame as a kitten. Oh, we are in it to win, and don't you forget it."

The last speaker closed the door, and the first drew a table out from its place near the wall.

That done, a part of the carpet was rolled up, disclosing a trap.

While one of the murderous knaves raised this, the other dragged the body forward, and together they lifted the insensible man and dropped him in the hole that yawned below.

"It's all day with him, anyhow, and nobody the wiser," declared the one who had struck the blow, as he closed down the trap.

"Yes; and now the next thing is to go and get our money for the work."

"You are right. He made a mistake when he meddled in this thing."

"That's what he done, for a fact, old man."

"We had a double cinch on him."

"You bet; and, we'll git double pay fer the same job."

"Ha, ha, ha! He didn't know we already had him under our eyes when he set out to play the detective."

The carpet and table replaced, the room was in as good order as before, and the men were about going out when the door opened and another man entered.

This time it was the thin man with the sharp nose and chin, and he appeared rather startled.

"Did you have a prisoner?" he asked.

"We ruther guess we did," was the answer given.

"Where is he?"

"Done up and laid away with care. Come down with your money, old man, and no trying to get out of it. We was jest going to find you, and then t'other feller what is in it with ye."

"In it with me?" in some surprise. "What do you mean? I am in it alone, and I didn't tell you to kill, only to take prisoner. If you have killed this man you have done something that will get us all into trouble, for he went to the police just before he got the note to come here."

The faces of the two guilty ones paled, and they looked at each other.

CHAPTER IX.

BILLY'S "WHERE AM I AT?"

"SWEET pertaters! Where am I at?"

So exclaimed Broadway Billy, when he stopped going down, as he gathered himself up out of the ruins.

Fortunate it had been for him that he had gone down after the falling wall, for otherwise he would certainly have been killed. He had dropped something like a dozen feet.

He seemed to be in a sort of pit, and it was almost totally dark, the gaslight coming through a hole in the wall above barely reaching the bottom in even the faintest degree. All was as still as the grave, as he listened, and his exclamation seemed entirely suitable.

"This is from bad to worse, I am afraid," he said to himself. "Would have been out of misery by this time if I had let the rats do their work. Maybe now I'm here to die of starvation. Nothing very comforting about that, with a hearty appetite like mine. But, never say die, William; you have just got

out of one consarned diffikilty and ought to be good for another.

Getting out his matchbox he struck a match to get some idea where he was.

He was simply in a hole.

As he looked about him, though, he found there was a way out of it, and freeing his feet from the *débris* he stepped to the opening.

A breath of cold, foul air came up from it, and he believed it must be an opening leading into a sewer.

His match went out and he lighted another, by the light of which he advanced a little way into the forbidding passage, taking care that his footing was secure.

Only a little distance had he gone when a draught deprived him of his light, and at the same time his foot slipped and he got another fall and went sliding for some distance down an incline.

When he brought up he *knew* where he "was at."

He was in a sewer!

"Well, so far so good, anyhow," he said to himself. "There is an outlet, somewhere, if I can only find it, but I don't know how that will be. I have heard of folks wandering for days down in these underground avenues, before getting out, and maybe it happens that some don't ever get out at all. Hope I won't be one of that sort, anyhow. There's one consolation, I'm no worse off than I was. Cheer up, William, and make a strike for liberty."

Taking note which way the water in the bottom was flowing, he started forward in the same direction.

He was in the dark, and it was slow progress, but he knew that his getting out at all depended on his finding an opening, and in order to do that he had to keep moving.

With many a slip, and sometimes with almost a fall, he blundered along for what seemed to him hours, and at last he began to get tired.

"I wonder what time it is anyhow?" he asked himself.

Out came his matchbox again, and his watch, and he found it was well into the evening.

It was some hours since he had first fallen into the trap, longer than he had thought it possible could be. It might be hours longer before he would be able to get out altogether.

Looking around him while the light of the match lasted, after glancing at his watch, he was surprised to find an opening right at his elbow.

It was not large, neither was it very small, and by the light of the match Billy looked into it.

That it was a tunneled passage, leading somewhere, was not to be doubted.

"I'm going to explore this thing," Billy declared to himself. "Sewers don't generally have openings of this sort leading into them, and it may be a side trail to the land of the living. Anyhow, here goes."

With the aid of another match he had taken his bearings carefully, and now he climbed up into the hole.

He could not stand erect in the passage, but could walk by stooping considerably, and he made his way along with the same caution he had been using previously.

At last he caught the gleam of a light ahead.

"Ha! that looks cheering!" the wanderer exclaimed. "There's a prospect of getting out, now, and when I do there will be a circus in the camp of the Philistines, I'm betting."

He pressed forward, and ere long came to the light itself.

It was a single gas jet, turned low, and was beside an iron door that was set in a stone wall.

The wall was evidently the foundation of

some building, as Billy reasoned, and the passage, he guessed, was for the carrying of some sort of refuse to the sewer.

Still, why was there not sufficient drainage under the building to answer all such requirements? he thought further. It did not look altogether right, and he fell to wondering what it could mean.

He tried the door, carefully, but it was fast.

"Well, this means something," he said to himself. "Wonder what? Nothing can surprise me in these days, in a city like New York. I expect there are greater things here than I ever dreamed of—I mean here in the city. Whether this is one of them or not remains to be seen."

He tried the door again, with more force, but it was fast enough, and just then he thought he heard a noise on the other side.

Pressing his ear against the iron plate, he listened.

Yes, there it was, sure enough, and he thought immediately he had stumbled upon a counterfeiters' den.

The sound was that of a hammer, or press, that sent forth a metallic ring with every blow, muffled and subdued though it was, and as he listened his first impression was strengthened.

"Still, it may not be," he reasoned. "I'm seeing mare's nests in every bush. Maybe it's only the clank of an electric engine. It's more likely to be that, or something like it, and I'll take the chances and give a try at the door, anyhow. Can't get into a much worse fix than I have just got out of, that is sure. So here goes for it, for luck."

He gave the door two or three resounding kicks, making a chamber beyond echo and re-echo again.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, as soon as he had done it. "That was enough to wake the sleeping Knickerbockers! I'm in for it now, for sure."

Almost immediately the sound of the hammer, or machinery, stopped, and this fact gave Billy cause for alarm. His pounding at the door would never have interrupted any honest proceeding.

"Yes, sir, I'm in for it," he decided, and he gripped tightly a revolver he had drawn from his pocket.

He waited, and presently there was a sound near the door.

Then a hand touched a bar or bolt on the other side, and a chain was heard to rattle.

Quick as thought came the idea to Billy to disguise.

It was but the work of a moment to attach a beard to his face, and it was done before a rough voice demanded:

"Who is there?"

"Number Five," Billy answered, promptly.

It was the first thing that came to him to say, and he referred to the number of charges in his revolver.

Immediately the bolt moved and the door swung open.

All within was light, and just beyond this chamber Billy caught sight of a larger one from which several men were looking out toward the door.

This, however, was only secondary in importance to something else which the detective's eyes took in as that door swung open. The man before him was a low-browed, murderous-looking fellow with beardless face.

Instantly the thought flashed through Billy's mind that he had seen this face before and he asked himself where. And in the same instant it came to him—it was the face of one of the men who had attacked him and put him in the den of rats! He had had just a glimpse of the visage then.

It was the face of Hob Feeny!

The man had a revolver in hand, but he did not use it; he was evidently too surprised.

Not that he recognized Billy, that was impossible; but he saw it was a stranger, and that their secret was known.

What startled him most, however, there is no doubt, was the fact that Billy's revolver was aimed at his head so that he looked into its cold tube as he opened the door.

All this in the briefest time possible to contain it, and the door was closed with a clang and Billy was barred out, the force of the door almost knocking the weapon out of his hand.

He was just as well pleased, for it had been certain death to enter.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, under his breath. "What's to be done? If it's the same fellow, and he gets me, it'll be my funeral this time, sure. I guess I'll be scarce when they look again."

He hastened back along the passage with all the speed possible, leaving the men in the chamber loudly talking.

It was necessary to get beyond their reach, or fare badly.

He made all the haste possible, and reached the opening into the sewer just as the door was thrown open again and several revolver shots rung out.

Had he been there it would have meant death, for the men had evidently fired to kill, determined to take no chances against unknown numbers but to get in the first deadly work themselves.

The next moment there was loud cursing, and against the light background the detective saw them coming along the passage toward the sewer.

He dropped into the opening, and turning, fired a shot in the direction of his foes to check their pursuit, dodging immediately to escape the return fire which he expected would follow.

And he was not mistaken, for several bullets came spitting and spattering along the passage, flinging a shower of dirt and splinters all around him. It was no place for him to tarry in, so he took to his heels and ran back along the way he had come.

In that direction he knew the ground, that it was clear, and he did not stop even though the firing was soon heard again, and some bullets came flying in his direction. In the darkness he knew the men could not tell which way he had turned, and he had to take the chances against a stray bullet till he was beyond their reach. There was no pursuit, and after a time Billy slackened his pace, feeling that for the time being he was safe.

CHAPTER X.

LIGHT AT LAST.

BROADWAY BILLY wandered around in the sewers until completely tired out, and without finding means of escape.

Many times he had stopped and called for help, at places where light came down from the street above, but no answer was made and he would wander on again as before.

At last, though, he could go no further, for he was overcome with sleep and fatigue, and about that time he had come to a spot that invited him to sit down. It was in a branching sewer just made.

It was clean and new—in fact not finished yet, and some boards and dirt were at hand.

Billy lighted a match to view the spot, and finding it princely beside the other parts through which he had come, threw himself upon the boards at full length to close his eyes in rest for a moment.

When he awoke he thought he would glance at his watch.

He felt like a new man, but wonderfully hungry, and when he had lighted a match to look at the time he found his watch had stopped.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed. "How long have I been asleep? My watch

ought to have run all night and till sometime in the afternoon. It can't be it is run down!"

He proceeded to wind it, and found it had. The spring was completely spent, and his suspicion must be correct.

"Well, I don't wonder," he said to himself. "I was played out, and it is as still as the grave here, almost, nothing but the faint rumble of the streets to be heard. I have slept like a log."

He had guessed aright; he had slept all the remainder of the night, and far into the day.

With no means of knowing the time, he could not set his watch right, but at a guess he made it twelve o'clock.

Had he made it two he would have come nearer the hour.

"I'll let it go at that for the present," he said. "By the way I feel inside I know it's high dinner-time, at least. Now, then, for another try to get out of this miserable network of filth streams."

Now he pushed forward with determined effort, and having come out into the larger sewers it was not altogether dark.

Light came down here and there at an opening, and so did the sound of the rumble of the street, showing him how useless it would be to shout. He did try it, but could not make himself heard.

Thus he wandered, on and on and yet on.

Finally he came to realize where he was making a mistake, when his watch was indicating near the hour of three.

He had been turning this way and that, instead of keeping straight ahead on one line, which must sooner or later come to an end somewhere. He had been following each inviting way that offered.

"Wonder I didn't use my brain before this," he complained. "Might have been out if I had. But, I was too sleepy to do it last night, and now I've had so much sleep that my thinker is dull. We'll try the new plan, William, and see what it will pan."

With that resolve he kept straight on his way, regardless of every broader or more inviting branch that appeared.

Finally he came to a place where a part of the top and side of the sewer had fallen in, and the debris at the bottom formed quite a dam that was not pleasant in the approach.

In order to get around it as dry as possible, Billy mounted to the edge of the broken wall, there being some light here, and in doing so discovered a passage that seemed to lead back for a distance.

It was not like the one he had found on the previous night, but looked more like an excavation that had been made for a cellar at some time or other.

The floor was about on a level with the broken part of the wall, and he stepped off onto it.

Barely had he done so when he heard a heavy fall on the floor above.

This was followed by heavy feet, and voices, though he could not catch the words. Then came the moving of something, and the next moment light came in from overhead.

A square hole was disclosed, and even as Billy looked a dark shadow filled it for an instant and a heavy body fell at his feet.

"It's all day with him; anyhow, and nobody the wiser," he heard a voice say, as the trap was closed, and with a revolver in hand Billy was tempted to send a bullet in that direction.

He did not, however, but listened.

More was said above, but he could not catch the words, and while he listened he heard a door open and close and another voice was added.

Finding that he could not hear anything, Billy gave attention to the body of the man that had been thus disposed of, lighting a

match in order to see what manner of personage he had been in life.

He discovered a good-looking young man, well-dressed, having every appearance of refinement about him.

Billy felt to learn if he was dead, and found he was not.

He cast about for means of a better light, and it was at hand.

On the ground lay several bits of candle, one of considerable length, and taking up this he lighted it.

This threw more light upon the scene, and he examined the man further. His watch was in his pocket, and Billy drew it forth to learn the time. He found it was near the hour of six.

"Sweet pertaters!" he cried, "I'm nearer starved than I thought I was!"

He set his own watch accordingly.

"Well, it is plain this was not a case of robbery," he reasoned. "If it had been, the watch and chain wouldn't be here. Then what was it? The man was wanted out of the way for some reason, I take it."

Having put the candle in a place where it would stand, Billy gave more critical attention to the man; to learn where he was hurt, and to what extent.

He could discover no wounds, but soon came upon a lump on the back of the head that was not natural, and guessed the rest.

Knowing then the man was simply unconscious, he set about restoring him to life again.

It took time, but finally it was accomplished.

When he opened his eyes he gave a start, but Billy hastened to speak some words to reassure him.

"Don't be alarmed, pard," he said, using his Westernism. "I'm a friend, so there's nothing to fear. Your enemies have done their worst, now, and you're alive and kicking."

It was some moments before the man got himself together sufficiently to put thoughts into words.

"Who are you?" he asked, presently.

"My name is Billy Weston."

"Not Broadway Billy?"

"Nobody else," answered Billy, feeling some surprise.

"Then you are the the very man I was looking for, sir!"

"And who are you?"

"My name is Edward Franklin, sir."

"Guess I don't know you. You seemed to know where to find me, anyhow—ha, ha, ha!"

"Yes; but it was against my will, I assure you. Whew! but my head buzzes! I guess it was intended for a blow to kill. And it would have been death, too, but for finding you here."

"No, you would have come to anyhow, after awhile. But, we are not out of the woods yet, and not likely to get out unless we have better luck together than I have had alone. But, you said you had been looking for me. What did you want to see me about?"

"In regard to the matter Miss Laurence put in your hands yesterday."

"Whew! That so? Then my guess wasn't so far wrong after all, though I did not put much faith in it."

"What was your guess?"

"That my own trouble had come of that very matter."

"There's no doubt about it, sir, for such is the fact. We suspected it, and I have put the case in the hands of the police."

"What about my aides, the boys?"

"They are missing, too."

"Sweet pertaters! this is serious. I can stand a good deal myself, but when they do harm to my boys they rouse me up. But, tell me all about it, so I'll get my grip on the matter?"

And so Mr. Franklin did.

By the time he had done, he was feeling quite like himself again, and Billy gave him something of his own adventures.

It looked as though Providence truly had thrown them together to be each other's help, and there was no longer any doubt about the terrible scheme that was at work to steal a fortune.

"We'll bring them to time, when we get a chance at them," Billy confidently declared.

"But, first, we must get out of here, and then I must look after my pair of ferrets. It is possible they have got so far into a hole they can't get out again. I would not bet they haven't been killed."

"Goodness help their murderers, if that's so!"

"You well may say it. Better they had a millstone around their necks, and so forth. They'll wish they had never been born."

"Well, we'll see if we can get out. I can't promise you a pleasant journey by any means, and it'll be rough on your clothes, but that will matter little if we can get out with our lives."

"Well, lead the way."

"The blind leading the blind, eh?"

"And both fall into the—river, I hope!"

They gathered up all the pieces of candle they could find, knowing they might need them, and set forth.

Billy felt less lonely now, but none the less hungry, and he eagerly hoped they would soon get out of the dilemma they were in, and once more gain their places in the land of the living.

After the obstruction was passed, where the wall had fallen in, they had easy going, with the candles to light their way, but they were not destined to escape in a minute, nor in an hour. Indeed, a considerable time passed before they saw their hope realized.

Franklin had just finished a cheerful story, something he had read—Lost in the Sewers of Paris—something calculated to inspire them with hope! when Billy gave vent to an exclamation of joy. The water was deepening about their feet, and ahead the lights on the river could be seen—it was a low tide at the hour.

CHAPTER XI.

HARRY IN HARD LUCK.

LET us return to Harry—not Happy Harry now, confined in his narrow prison—with no hope for escape.

He had good reason to fear Broadway Billy had been killed, the fate of Silent Seth was unknown, and here was he, terribly in the toils and likely to remain there for the present.

His mind had been busy, trying to devise some plan for freeing himself, but all in vain, so far—and some hours had passed.

It would have been some satisfaction if he could have talked to himself, but he was gagged.

Several times persons occupied the adjoining room, and he heard more than one scheme of rascality discussed, the little good it might do him to hear.

It was about this time, when he had been there some hours and altogether in despair, that he overheard other voices in the room, and moved so as to lay his ear against the wall to listen again.

"Well, Harp, what luck?" one voice asked.

Had not Harry heard that name before? He thought he had.

Yes, he had heard the voice, too, and he tried to think where.

"The best of luck, Prettyman," was the response. "The fellow is done for."

Hal! That was the name of the fellow Harry and Seth had encountered in the store, that morning!

"What; so soon?"

"Exactly. He will never trouble you again, and no living soul will ever know what his fate was."

"Good for you! But, his body will be found?"

"I suppose so, later on, but not right away."

"When it is found, then I'll pay you."

"See here, you'll pay me now, Amson Prettyman! If you don't, I'll blow out on you. Do you see?"

"Yes, you are in position to do that!"

"Just what I am! He was put out of the way without my hand appearing in it, and I could expose the whole thing without danger of getting mixed up in it."

"I don't believe it. That's impossible."

"Well, if you want to try it, just don't pay me, that's all."

"Oh, if you are going to make a fuss, I'll come down, of course; but it don't look fair to have to pay till the proof is furnished."

"When a man's work is done, his pay is due. This work is done; I want the pay."

"All right, all right; but, we won't have it one-sided."

"What do you mean?"

"If pay you, you have got to give a receipt for the money."

"What's that for?"

"Protection."

"How?"

"Why, if I pay you now, you might come on me again, and finally get me under your hand. It has got to be give and take. I give, you take; you give, I take. See me? That's what I mean."

"And by having my name to a bit of paper, you would have me in your power to do with as you please."

"Only for self-protection."

"Well, you'll never get it."

"Then you'll never get your money."

"I'll blow out, then."

"All right; do it! If you can stand it, so can I. Can you prove anything you would say?"

"I'd try hard to prove it."

"And every word would put the rope around your own neck."

"Bah! I tell you I am out of it. There is a double case here, and the other side did the work."

"Then according to that I don't owe you money anyhow."

"I was back of it, though, and engineered the thing. Come, you had better shell out the ducats."

"I will, when I have the proof I demand, and not before. You cannot prove a thing against me, for I was not fool enough for that. Let me know when you have the proof, or come and see me when the proof has been found, and then we'll settle."

"Hold on; don't go off so fast. I've got one other little word for you. I want you to settle here and now, and if you don't I'll go privately and tell Miss Laurence the whole story."

"You wouldn't do that!"

"Try me, if you believe it, that's all."

"But that would ruin my chances, and I would profit nothing by the bold stroke."

"I know it; that's where I've got you."

"I'll do it on condition, then."

"And what's that?"

"That you give the receipt."

"Then you'll never pay me, that's all."

"That settles it, then; I'll bid you good-evening."

It was a case in which both held the mastery, it seemed, and neither was in position to force the other. If Harper Heron was shrewd in the refusing to sign his name to a paper, Amson Prettyman had been none the less so in his part of it.

The alert-minded Harry was taking it all in, and now he only wished he might get out of his prison to report to the police all he knew.

There would be a prospect for a rattling among the dry bones, he thought, and he would be there.

After talking the matter over at much

greater length, but only to reach the same ending after all, the two rascals went their way, and again Harry was alone.

He was cramped, thirsty, hungry, and everything else, and was in despair.

What was he to do? Was there no hope for him.

Of a sudden a thought came to him, something he had not thought of before, and he could but wonder that he had not.

The place he was in has been described—a room only about four feet wide by a good many in length, and the walls were remarkably thin, as Harry knew well enough. It looked reasonable that he could break through!

Not that it would help him, being bound, but it would be some satisfaction, since it would expose the secret room, and something might turn up in his favor if he could get out.

No sooner thought of than he set about putting it into practice, so worming around till he had his neck and shoulders braced against one side, he lifted his bound feet and brought them against the opposite wall with the force of a sledge.

The result was almost a surprise to himself.

There was a crash, a flash of light, and down went a big portion of the wall and the boy beadle's legs shot out into the room!

He was still bound and gagged none the less, and lay helpless across the broken edge of the hole he had made, and by the lamp in the room he knew it was night. He had been a prisoner a long time.

In a moment the door opened, and the old woman of the house came in.

At sight of what had been done, she let out a string of imprecations, and rushing out into the hall, returned with a broom.

Laying hold upon Harry, then, she jerked him out to the middle of the room, and there she began to ply the broom upon him with a vigor that was painful to the victim, to say the least.

It would have been a relief to Harry could he have yelled, but he could not, so he had to bear it as best he could.

He was glad Seth was not there to witness it, anyhow!

While this was going on the door opened, and in walked Bob Feeny and Burk Burret.

"The deuce!" cried Burret.

"The worse-than-that, you mean!" exclaimed Feeny.

"I'll kill him, that's what I'll do!" screamed the old woman, as she still laid on the broom.

Harry was writhing and squirming like a good fellow, and he was thankful to the villain Feeny when he ordered the old hag to desist.

"We'll take care of him," he said. "That's what we've come for. Get us a big sack, that's all we ask, and a stone for the bottom of it, and we'll give him a soft bed in the East River!"

Harry's blood forgot to flow, or so he felt anyhow.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the old hag. "That will serve him just right for the damage he has done here! I'd like to be the one to pitch him in!"

"Never you mind, we'll see that he goes there all right. You do what you're told, old woman."

The woman gave Harry a parting thwack for luck, and went out of the room to get the things that had been called for.

She soon returned, with a big bag, or sack, and a stone in it.

"Now, sonny, you see what's goin' to happen to ye," said the big ruffian. "I guess you'll wish you hadn't been no detective, won't ye?"

How Harry would have delighted in giving him an answer!

"It was all fun on little cases," the fellow went on, "but you have run up against men

this time, and you'll find there's a difference. Or ruther, ye won't find it, for ye won't live long enough."

"Here, old woman, hold open the bag," said Burret, who had made it ready, the stone at the bottom of it.

"Yes, an' glad I'll do it!" she cried, as she obeyed the order.

"Now, Hob, lay hold of him."

"You bet!"

So was Harry picked up, and head first was shoved into the yawning sack, his legs and feet being shoved in after him, and then the neck of the sack was tied up securely.

If ever a boy was in a fix, Happy Harry was in one then.

"Now, see that all's clear," ordered Hob, "and we'll be off to market with him. It's early, and we'll never be questioned. Police are too 'fraid of their good clothes to meddle with junk-carts. Step out, old woman, and see if there's a bluecoat around."

Her report, when she returned, was that the coast was clear, and the bag was taken up and carried out and put on a junkman's cart that was in waiting, and Hob, in a ragged coat, set off with it, looking not unlike a scavenger rag-gatherer of the very worst type. He went on his way at a usual walk, down toward the river, and finally to the water's edge, where he dumped the cart and the sack rolled into the river with a loud splash!

CHAPTER XII.

THE SILENT SHADOWER'S FRIEND IN NEED.

And how had it fared with Silent Seth?

He was not gagged, when left bound in the cellar, but had been warned that if he made any outcry his brains would be battered out.

As he lay there his reflections were anything but pleasant, and he wondered if this was to be the last case he would ever figure in with his noble chief and brave "pard" Harry.

Testing his bonds, he found them only too well secured. There was little hope that he could escape unaided.

And what his fate was to be was altogether uncertain.

Could he have had his choice, he believed he would rather have faced the worst at once than wait in that uncertainty.

But, there he was, and he looked at it in his cool and practical manner. How was he to get out of his dilemma? That was the important question of the moment. He could not answer it.

He could not blame himself for his misfortune, for he believed it had come about by accident and not by design.

The house was not a silent one by any means, for heavy feet were moving in some part of it almost constantly, to the slamming of doors and loud voices frequently in cursing.

It was plainly a pretty hard kind of place, and Seth knew—or at any rate believed, his life was not worth a nickel. And, he kept his brain hard at work trying to conjure up some scheme by which he might get free. But, think as he would, it was a long time coming.

He was not gagged, as said, and finally, when he had tired of thinking, he took a turn to whistling.

This was some relief to his mental strain, he found, and he trilled out a popular air at a lively and cheerful rate, as though he were as happy as a lark.

And he kept it up for considerable time, till at last a door opened and a ray of light came into the dismal place away back at the rear end, and light feet sounded on the stairs.

Seth stopped his whistling, to learn who was coming, and as he stopped so did the feet on the steps.

Noting this the prisoner broke forth afresh.

"Who are ye down dere?" a feminine voice demanded, in unmistakable Irish accent.

"As likely a boy as the two eyes of ye ever beheld," Seth cheerfully answered her, as though nothing was the matter and he was having the best kind of a time.

"And phwat are ye doing dhere?"

"Taking my ease, sure."

"Come out dhis way till Oi take a look at ye?"

"Now I'd like to, miss, but I'm too comfortably situated to stir. An' ye care to see me ye will have to come where I am."

Seth gave just a touch of the brogue to his talk.

"Oi could almost swear it's Dinny O'Fin ye are," the female declared.

"And ye can't swear that I'm not, till ye have seen me, can ye? I'm not going to be telling ye, depend on it."

Seth whistled again, a lively Irish air, and the steps came on down the stairs to the bottom, and toward him.

"Phwere are ye?" the voice presently asked, in lower tone, near him.

"Mind out or ye'll be stepping on me!" Seth warned.

"And phwy don't ye get up?"

"If you had a light you would see."

"Dhat same Oi'll make at wan-t, wid a match."

The match was produced, and quickly lighted, and they could see each other.

Seth saw a girl about twenty years of age, by no means pretty, cheaply clad and with her sleeves rolled up.

"It is tied up ye are!" she cried.

"A few," said Seth, in his dry way.

"And phwat is dhat fur, Oi'd be askin' ye?"

"You ask me too much," Seth declared.

"I guess it's for keeps."

At that the girl laughed, and as her match went out she stepped forward and stooped down.

"An' ye won't tell on me," she said, "Oi'll be afther letting ye out av dhis fix ye are in. Sure Oi t'ought it was Dinny, whin Oi heard ye whistlin', and Oi'd let him out ye can bet!"

"I'll never give ye away," Seth quietly promised. "I've been here as long as I care to stay, anyhow."

"All right; Oi'll help ye; but av ye get caught don't l'ave it be knownst."

"You can trust me for that. What is your name?"

"Mary Ann O'Flathery."

"That's a good name, and it's no flathery I'm givin' ye in saying so."

The girl had now taken a pair of scissors from her pocket, and with them she proceeded to set the prisoner free.

"Dhere ye are," she said, in a moment.

Seth got up and stretched himself.

"Much obliged to ye, Mary Ann," he offered. "Hope I can return the favor in some way some time. Now, what kind of a house is this?"

"Sure, it's dhe ould divil's own ranch, so it is! It's mesel' dhat's going to be afther l'aving it an' Oi get me next wages dhat's due. Oi wouldn't stay here any longer, and Oi had to beg me bread!"

"That's right. I take it you're a pretty honest sort of girl, and I won't forget you. What do you do?"

"Oi work in dhe kitchen. It was your whistlin' brought me here to see who it was, sure."

"Well, which way do I go out?"

"Oi can let ye out dhe back way, so Oi can. Come on wid me."

Seth followed, and was conducted up the stairs, cautioned to move silently so as to avoid detection.

The girl went out first, closing the door,

and Seth waited until he heard a signal that had been agreed upon between them.

He went out, then, and was quickly conducted into a rear yard and to a narrow passage, and thanking the girl again for the favor, made all haste to get out and away.

As soon as he was gone the girl went back, entered the cellar-way and closed and fastened the door, coming up then by the stairs by which Seth had been carried down by his captors. By this, she could declare her innocence of any knowledge about the prisoner's escape.

"Well, now what?" Seth asked himself, when he felt safe.

He didn't answer it immediately, but put himself down to some hard thinking as he walked leisurely along.

He had been despoiled of the hair and beard that went to perfect his disguise, but still had on the clothes, and had another, though different, wig and whiskers in one of his pockets.

These he now put on, to the surprise of those who saw him in the act, but he was not satisfied yet. The clothes might let out the secret, for he had promptly decided to venture again on dangerous ground. So, he changed his course and went home, for a double purpose.

There he could perfect his disguise, and at the same time could learn whether anything had been heard from Billy or Harry.

His arrival there broke the terrible suspense, to a degree, for the absence of the trio had caused much worry.

Telling all he could, and making the picture as bright as possible for sake of Billy's mother, he was soon off again, in a new disguise.

This time he was a typical bootblack, with his box on his shoulder, and with a face remarkable for dirt.

He had taken care to leave plain word where he was going.

In due time he was in the vicinity of Hob Feeny's miserable den, where Tip was sitting in the doorway.

It was night—if we have forgotten to mention that fact, and the saloon was lighted up and appeared to be doing a thriving business.

There were a good many rough-looking fellows lounging around the bar, and on the other side of the room was a free lunch spread out as a tempting bait for any one who had a nickel to drop.

Seth sauntered in, and he was about as hard-looking as the worst of them.

Hob was not present, but another ruffian had his place at the bar, who eyed Seth as he entered.

The bootblack was not disturbed by this, however, but went straight to the free lunch and began to eat with a hearty appetite.

"Say, hold on there!" the man at the bar soon sung out.

Seth looked around, hand and mouth both full, as if wondering who was questioning his rights.

"I say hold on!" the barkeeper repeated. "Maybe somebody else would like to have a bite o' that. We don't furnish free meals."

"Free lunch, ain't it?" demanded Seth.

He pointed at the placard.

"Yes; but not a free snap fer suckers. You'd better git!"

"And who's a sucker?" Seth wanted to know. "Not me!"

"It looks like it, anyhow."

"What'll you charge, then, to let me fill up?"

"It orter be worth a dollar, judgin' by the way ye have commenced at et."

"And let the first guzzler that comes along fill up fer five cents, hey? I don't call that no fair. Here, here's the price of a schooner; I don't want the stuff, fer it makes me sick, but this lunch goes right home."

He tossed a nickel to the man, and as there was no longer good room for argument, he was allowed to continue nibbling.

Tip had come in and stood near, watching him.

"Do you want some, too?" asked Seth. "If you do, and ain't got no money, I will put up a nickel fer ye."

"Naw, I don't want none!" was the stiff retort. "I belong here, I do, and my dad owns the hull lay-out. I was watchin' that ye didn't swoller the dishes, that was all."

The laugh was on Seth, and he took it all in good part.

While he stood there he heard crying in a rear room somewhere, as if a woman in sore distress, though the pleading voice was more like that of a young person.

"Tip," the bartender presently growled, "you go tell your old woman to shut that gal's mouth. If she don't, yer dad will do it when he comes, and she kin 'pend on it. We don't want to hear no sech wailin' out here."

Tip left the den to obey, a blow was heard, followed by a scream, and then all was still.

CHAPTER XIII.

BILLY AND SETH IN LINE.

WHEN Broadway Billy and Edward Franklin reached the very mouth of the sewer, with the water about to their waists, the cool, fresh air was delightful to them, after the foul poison they had been breathing so long.

"Can you swim?" Billy asked.

"Yes, I'm at home in the water," the reply.

"That's good, for we'll have to swim for it now. We'll get to the side of the dock out there, and we'll get up somehow."

"This must be right along the street, ain't it?"

"Yes; place where ship rides in the dock, but none happens to be here now."

"Well, say when you're ready, and I'm with you. I never expected the honor of sharing an adventure with you."

"Not much of an honor, but it's better to share the adventure than to share a grave together in these miserable sewers, I take it. It isn't the first time I've been in them, but this is the worst dose I ever got."

"I'll tell you, they ought to be named and lighted, Mr. Weston."

"Yes, I'd urge that, if I expected to come this way often."

So they talked on for a few minutes, while they made ready for the plunge they had to take.

While they stood thus there was a scraping sound overhead, and some dirt and small particles came showering down into the water in front of them.

The next moment something heavier came, and there was a loud splash.

"What's that?" whispered Franklin.

Even before the words left his lips, however, Broadway Billy had left his side, plunging into the river.

Franklin waited to see his head appear, before following, and in a moment it did appear, near at hand, with face turned toward him.

"Catch hold and pull me in," Billy gasped, in low tone.

"All right!" the response.

A couple of strokes brought him near enough, and laying hold upon him, his comrade in misfortune aided him in gaining a footing.

"Lift with me, quick!" Billy directed.

"I've got something or somebody in a bag, and it may be the girl we are in search of. That thought came to me when I heard it drop."

He had not waited, while speaking, nor had Franklin, but together they lifted the sack partly out of the water, and a quick in-

vestigation by feeling showed them that Billy's guess was partly right, anyhow, for the bag contained a human form, and they held the head carefully above the water.

"Got a knife?" asked Billy.

"Yes."

"Rip the sack, carefully."

Billy held it, and in a moment the ripping operation was commenced, and in a few minutes completed.

It was light enough for them to see the form of the person they had rescued, but not the features, and they knew it was a boy and not a girl, as at first wildly guessed.

A careful cut with the knife removed the gag, and then the poor victim gave full vent to his choking and splutterings, out of which, finally, came forth the half-articulate exclamation:

"Krs—chew!—fer—oughh!—Klm—chew!—ya!"

"Happy Harry! as I live!" cried Billy.

"One of your own boys?" echoed Franklin, in astonishment.

"Yes; and what could have happened more providentially?"

"Nothing, I guess, for providential it surely is."

Harry it was!

Quickly his hands and legs were freed and Billy and his companion assisted him in getting the water out of himself.

It took some time to do this, for Harry had been pretty well strangled, but at last he was able to talk and give something of an account of himself. And he did so.

"Crackers an' cheese!" he exclaimed, "but I thought that was the last of me! And it would been, too, boss, only fer you; I'll never forget it."

"I was only the instrument in a greater Hand," answered Billy, impressively.

"Well, you got there, just the same, anyhow, and now if we don't jest more'n curl their back hair for 'em it will be funny."

"We have got to get out of here first," Billy suggested.

"That won't be much trouble, if you can all swim like me."

They plunged in for the effort, and, after a considerable effort, all three were safely out and once more upon the street.

"Now," said Billy, "a change of clothes, and then something to eat. I'm like a famished wolf."

A little walk brought them to a street where second-hand clothing abounded, and there exchanges were made that were perfectly satisfactory all around, and each was more or less in disguise.

Billy himself had selected a suit that was long out of fashion, with a hat to match, and he looked like a typical countryman, in to see the "elephant" for the first time in his life. And when he had attached a pair of thinly-settled side-boards on his jaws, the effect was heightened.

The others need not be described.

"Now," said Billy, "I think we'll have to part company for a time. Harry, I want you to go home and report us alive, and learn where Seth is, if you can; and you, Mr. Franklin, had better send word to Miss Laurence that we are still on deck, and after that keep yourself well out of sight."

"All right, as to the first, but as to the last—I'd rather take a hand in the business of seeing this thing to the end."

"Very well, then; you and Harry stick together, for it is pretty safe to say that Harry will get into it again before it is ended, and will perhaps need help. You and he stick together."

"All right!" from both; and so they parted.

Billy intended going to that alley where he had first been entrapped, to begin his investigation there.

Harry had given him all the points he had been able to glean, of course, and he was now armed with the names of the chief

rascals in the play, but he hardly knew where to locate them.

He had also a description of those Harry had seen, and Harry was good at drawing word pictures.

While Billy was walking along toward his destination, a young man suddenly rushed up to him and grasped him by the hand, exclaiming:

"Why, Mr. Brown! how do you do?"

"I'm purty wal, I thank ye, sir," Billy drawled; "but I'm blamed if you ain't got the 'vantage of me, b'gosh!"

"What! you don't remember me? Don't know the chap that spent the summer out your way two years ago? Well, well, I knew you the moment I set eyes on you, for you haven't changed a bit. Where are you going?"

"Oh, I'm jest a-wanderin' around to see what I kin see, that's all. No, I don't 'member ye, but I s'pose it's all right, if you know me. I drove the hack that season, ye know, from the station to Plaintown. Seen hundreds that I don't remember. I'm glad ye noticed me."

"Notice you! I'm not the fellow to slight summer acquaintances, Mr. Brown. Let's see, what was your first name?"

"Josh, sir."

"My name is Phil Bandervelt. What do you say to our seeing the sights for to-night in company?"

"I'm 'greeable, sir."

"Come on, then; and, call me Phil—that's good enough for me."

"All right, Phil; I'm with ye, and I reckon I'll have somethin' to tell the boys when I git back to Plaintown."

"It won't be my fault if you don't, Josh."

It will be seen that Billy played into the fellow's hands, and had helped him along nicely with his little game, for he believed he recognized the fellow as the same one Harry had described as being Harper Heron, and if that was so he was just the company he wanted!

Billy had satisfied his appetite, as much as he dared after so long a fast, and felt in pretty fair condition again.

Mr. Bandervelt took the lead, declaring he knew every crook in the city, and that he could show his friend more of the elephant in an hour than half the police could find in a week.

Suddenly, however, he stopped.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed. "I've got an appointment to keep, and almost forgot it. Will you come with me? It won't take us long."

"Why, yes, I don't mind; where is it?"

"I'll tell you. I had a ticket in a lottery, and it has drawn one of the prizes, and I've got to go and get the money on it. It won't take us long, and as soon as I get the money and some more tickets for the next chance, I'll be with you for the night."

"Yes, I'm with ye. I've hearn tell 'bout these here lotteries, and if it's a fair one, I wouldn't mind puttin' in a dollar m'self, b'gosh!"

"You can do as you please about that, of course. You might have good luck the first draw, and you might not."

So they talked, and Billy followed his guide, taking care to note which way he went.

At last they came to a saloon in a low quarter, over the door of which was the name—Hob Feeny!

Billy was sure of his ground now, and felt to make sure his weapons were ready for instant use in case of emergency.

Here Mr. Bandervelt entered, telling his companion not to be alarmed, that it was all right, and at the moment of entering Billy's eyes met a welcome sight.

He recognized Silent Seth!

"Shine, sir? shine?" Seth asked, stepping

quickly forward to him. "Make ye look like a reg'lar sport."

"Yes, I guess ye kin, fer they need it," Billy answered. "Hold on, Mister Ganderbelt, till I git polished up."

The sharper smiled at the supposed countryman, and said he would just step into the next room while it was being done, and for him to come in as soon as the work was finished; just the arrangement Billy most desired.

The sharper disappeared, and while Seth polished away at his chief's shoes, the two carried on a conversation by signs and whispers.

CHAPTER XIV.

SLIGHTLY SURPRISED.

THERE was no time for Seth to tell his story, nor was it necessary; the present situation was the important thing.

Seth had gleaned more points since we took leave of him at the closing of the preceding chapter, and had almost confirmed his suspicion that the girl he had heard crying was no other than little Zita Burret!

Getting into conversation with Tip, he had discovered that the boy had a fondness for pitching pennies, and pitching several times with him, and losing every time, Tip had at last invited him into the rear room where they could carry the business further.

There Seth could hear more plainly what was going on in other parts of the house, as doors were opened occasionally, and he heard the same voice pleading for liberty.

He heard the name Laurence mentioned, the strongest point he had that his suspicion was right.

And these points he quickly turned over to his chief.

Needless to say, Broadway Billy was elate at the prospect of being able to find the child alive and rescued her.

Telling Seth to remain where he could to be on hand if needed, Billy passed into the inner room as soon as his shoes had received the necessary polish, where he found his friend awaiting him.

Billy's disguise would not have been sufficient, but for the power he had of changing the expression of his face to suit any character.

"There, that has put the finishing touch on you, sure, Josh," the sharper exclaimed. "Sit down, now, and we'll wait, for the party hasn't come yet."

"All right."

"What will you take?"

"Oh, a lemmer-nade, I guess."

"Pshaw! you want something stronger'n, that."

"Wal, ye kin make it sassyferreller, if ye want to, then."

The sharper had to laugh at the greenness his acquaintance from the country exhibited.

"Why can't you take beer or whisky?" he asked.

"Oh! my!" in much alarm. "I have signed the pledge, ye know, out our way!"

Broadway Billy never allowed a drop of anything strong to pass his lips, and could always invent excuses when pressed.

So, he was allowed to have his "sassyferreller" while his companion took something a good deal stronger, and they spent the time talking while they awaited the coming of the parties Bandervelt desired to see.

They had to wait a considerable time, but at last the men put in their appearance.

There were three of them.

One was a big, brutal-looking fellow with smooth face; another was thin, with sharp nose and chin, while the last had more the appearance of a gentleman.

As the three came in, Billy's pretending friend rose, and, greeting them all, said to the big fellow:

"Mr. Jones, I have come around to draw

on that ticket, and to get some more. Let me introduce my friend Mr. Brown, from out in Jersey."

Hob Feeny looked at Billy hard—for Hob the big fellow was, but Billy stood well the searching look.

"That's all right, sir," he responded. "We always pay cash here, you know. Our game is fair and square, but we think of closing it soon."

"Why, how is that?"

"Can't stand it; customers are too lucky these days."

"But, you'll sell tickets to-night, won't you? I don't want to miss to-morrow's draw."

"Yes, we'll see how our luck will be, but if it goes against us we'll have to shut up the business. Can't see a hole in our pockets, you know."

It was the thinnest of thin games.

Mr. Bandervelt excused himself for a moment, on some pretext or other, and left Billy to the influence of the others till his return.

"Say," and Feeny turned to his companions, "ever see a face like his before?"

Billy looked at them all as if amazed at this turn, and kept to perfection the expression he had assumed.

His odd attire aided him greatly, of course.

"He looks like a fellow I saw not long ago," said Job Heron, "but not enough to make a fellow think it could be the same one."

"No, of course not."

They eyed Billy for some moments, and then Feeny proceeded to tell him about his wonderful lottery scheme.

While they were talking there came a cry in the hall, a sharp cry as of fright, and the voice was that of a girl.

Following it immediately was the piping voice of a boy, shouting:

"Dad! dad! She's gittin' 'way!"

"Blazes!" cried Feeny, leaping to his feet, "it's that little she-cat I've got on my hands."

He sprung to a door and out into a hall, the scream was repeated, and with a string of oaths he came back into the room dragging the little girl by the arm.

She was a sweet-faced child of twelve or so, but now looking terrified, and her eyes were red with weeping. She was clad in a common gown, and a round comb held her short but heavy hair in place.

It was Zita Burret!

Broadway Billy recognized her at a glance by the photograph Miss Laurence had shown him.

"Somethin' has got to be done with this here brat!" Feeny cried, giving the child a jerk. "She has been givin' us nothin' but trouble ever sence she's been here, and I'm tired of it!"

"Why not let Mom Brunner take her?" suggested Burk Burret.

"Better do what I first said," growled Feeny.

"No, no! I'll never agree to that!"

"B'gosh! what seems ter be the matter?" demanded Broadway Billy, with his country drawl.

"Matter enough," Feeny complained.

"This kid is crazy, and we—"

"It isn't so, sir! it isn't so!" cried the child.

"They have stolen me from my home, and they will not let me go back—"

"Shut your fool head!" snarled Feeny, giving her another jerk. "You don't know what—"

"Stole ye, hev they, b'gosh!" cried Billy. "Guess we'll have ter see about that. I'm Josh Brown from Plaintown, I am, and I don't 'low no sech business ter go by unnoticed!"

"You had better not meddle here, I warn you," growled the big ruffian. "We'll attend to our own affairs. I'll be back in a minute—"

He started to lead the child from the room, but Billy stepped in the way.

"You ain't goin' out o' here till I know more about this hyer matter," he fearlessly cried. "I don't care if you are biggest!"

"Why, you country yam, I'll eat ye if ye don't get out o' my way!"

"Try it on, and see if it ain't the biggest job ye ever tackled," was the defiant rejoinder. "I kin throw ary one o' dad's oxen, an' I guess I kin take a fall out o' you!"

"You kin, hey?"

The big, low-browed, murderous-looking villain let go of the girl's hand for a second, and grabbed up a big bottle that stood on the table.

All the others sprung to their feet, and the frightened Tip ran toward the corner of the room where he took shelter behind another table and some chairs, while the girl flew to Billy.

Burk Burret had whipped out a formidable-looking knife, and would have leaped at the supposed countryman had not Job Heron thrust his right arm in front of him to stay him. He evidently knew the temper of the man, that he meant nothing short of murder.

"Hold!" he cried. "Would you spoil all your chances?"

All this in a moment, for it was even while Feeny was grabbing up the big bottle.

As Hob wheeled around he raised the bottle to strike the daring countryman to the floor, but in the same moment a change came over the face of Mr. Brown, and with left hand protecting the child, his right came up with a cocked revolver.

The flashing eyes and resolute lips of intrepid Broadway Billy had now no assumed expression.

"Stop!" he cried. "Drop that, or I'll drop you!"

He was now recognized, and a look of intense murderous hatred came instantly into the face of the big ruffian. He drew back his arm regardlessly to hurl the bottle at the detective's head.

Quicker than thought, semi-disguised Broadway Billy fired.

It was a shot that saved his life, undoubtedly, for the arm was in motion of throwing the bottle when the bullet bored its way through his muscles.

The expression on the man's face changed to one of keenest pain, and he almost let the bottle fall, but in his resolute, dogged desperation he raised it again as if to throw.

"Hold!" the young detective cried. "I spared the bone that time, but if I have to fire again I'll shatter it for you. And if that does not do, I'll drop you in your tracks where you stand!"

This had the desired effect, and pretending that it was all through intensity of pain, the fellow let the bottle drop to the floor.

By this time others had crowded into the room from the saloon proper, and among them Silent Seth.

Nor was he alone!

Happy Harry and Edward Franklin, having made hasty work of what they had undertaken, had been able to get on the track of Feeny and the others, and had trailed them to this den.

So, coming in, Seth, Harry, and Franklin, each whipped out a revolver and all ranged themselves with Broadway Billy, covering the now cowering and astonished knaves.

Harper Heron, too, had just come in from the hall, and he, too, was neatly trapped.

He stood just within the door, and as Billy ended speaking to Feeny, Happy Harry cried out:

"Shut that door, there! Don't you try to dodge! If you do, down goes your shanty, and don't you forget it!" and his weapon was turned full upon the younger rascal.

The fellow cowered and obeyed the order. And there they had them, hard and fast in a trap of their own setting.

CHAPTER XV.

SCOOPING THE RASCALS.

"CHRISTOPHER CHICAGO COLUMBIA!" cried Happy Harry, now as happy as he could be. "I want to know if this don't take the cake! Creepin' crackers! I should just say it does!"

Even imperturbable Silent Seth allowed a light of exultation to gleam in his eyes, for the victory was a signal one. They had their men covered, and though the odds was against them they could not well lose now, for everything was in their favor. But, it was not done yet.

"Surrender, every man of you!" Broadway Billy sternly ordered. "You thought you had removed me when you put me in that cellar with the rats, but you didn't figure just right, you see. Broadway Billy has come out on top of the heap again, as he always does! Into that corner, every jack or you, of I shoot to kill!"

The order was not to be disregarded, they all well knew, and with sullen looks the crooks obeyed.

Not only the principal rascals, but others who had rushed in to their aid from the saloon were thus cornered, and Billy held them securely.

"Now, Harry," the young detective chief ordered, "you go for police, and we'll hold the fort till you return with them. It's not far around to the — Station. Bring half a dozen at least."

Happy Harry, revolver in hand, sprung to obey.

Through it all, the little girl was clinging tightly to Broadway Billy, well recognizing her friend and protector.

"A pretty scheme you tried to work, Job Heron, and you, Burk Burret, uncle to this helpless child!" Billy scornfully denounced. "You thought to rob her of her fortune, at the same time sending her to a fate worse than death. Shame upon you! and may the law deal with you in severest measure!"

"It's a lie!" cried Heron. "What are you talking about?"

"Fool! to attempt to deny it," retorted Billy, in contempt. "It proves itself, and the best proof is this child."

"I know her not, sir; what foolish claim do you expect to make for her?"

"Little girl, what is your name?" Billy asked.

"Zita Burret, sir."

"What is your aunt's name, the lady with whom you live?"

"Vivia Laurence, sir."

"Why did you go away?"

"I didn't, sir; these men took me, when I was on the street one afternoon."

"Which men?"

She indicated Hob Feeny and Harp Heron.

"That is enough," said Billy. "You will only hurt your case the more by trying to deny it, you infamous rascals! You are under arrest, and whatever you say will be used against you."

"And this will not be the only charge against them, either," spoke up Mr. Franklin, referring to the attempt against his own life.

"No, you are right," echoed Billy. "You did not recognize Broadway Billy when you opened that iron door last night, Hob Feeny."

The big ruffian's face grew more pale than ever, and not his alone, either. It was plain that a big haul had been made, and that there was more to be brought to light than the one simple case.

"I didn't open no iron door last night," he growled. "Don't know what you're talking about."

"You mean you don't want to know."

"I know I'll git square with ye, fer this hole in my arm, that's what I do know!"

"And you had better let one of your friends there dress it for you, to stop the bleeding while you wait, hadn't you?"

This the big ruffian evidently thought too, for he quickly availed himself of the privilege and asked one of his fellow-prisoners to assist him.

In due time a police-sergeant with half a dozen officers came in, led by Happy Harry, and in a few words Broadway Billy gave them the key to the situation and they took charge of the prisoners.

Two officers were left in charge of the den, with orders to allow no one to go out until further instructions were given.

The prisoners were taken away, and duly taken care of at the station.

"Now," said Billy to Mr. Franklin, "you had better take this little girl and restore her to Miss Laurence, and tell her about the matter. I have no doubt you can do it far more agreeably than I."

"I'll be proud to undertake the task," was the response.

"Then do so, and I'll see the lady tomorrow."

So the happy lover set forth upon his agreeable mission, with little Zita clinging fast to him for safety.

The hour was not early, by this time, and the Laurence residence was dark by the time he arrived, but he rung the bell in a determined way and finally came a voice demanding who was there.

"It's I, Edward Franklin, with important news," he explained. "I must see Miss Laurence at once."

"Admit him, Susan," a voice further away ordered.

It was Vivia herself, she having recognized her lover the moment he spoke.

The door was thrown open and Franklin walked in, leading Zita by the hand.

Miss Laurence screamed, too, but it was an outcry of joy, and rushing down the stairs, regardless of the fact that she was arrayed in her night-robe, she caught the child to her heart.

"But, Auntie Vee," the child quickly said, "you must not let Susan get away, for she is a bad woman. It was she that helped them to get me, and she told the bad men when you were going to the police, so they could kill the good men who would come to get me. I heard—"

"Susan Coolidge!"

With that chilling exclamation the young lady turned upon her trusted servant, and the woman dropped upon her knees before her.

"Forgive me! oh! forgive me!" she cried. "They promised me so much money I could not help it!"

"Who promised you money?"

"Mr. Heron, and he said it was Mr. Burret, too. It was a good deal of money, enough to make me rich, and I could not resist—"

"Wretch! Wretch that you are! To sell the life of this sweet child for a little riches—wealth that was to be stolen from her! Go! Go at once! Never let me see your hated face again!"

Her scorn was so great that it overcame her judgment for the moment, and the woman was about to take advantage of her mistake when Franklin interposed.

"Don't be going quite so fast," he ordered. "She will be wanted, Vivia, you know, as a witness against the villains. I'll detain her and hand her over to the police."

"Spare me! Oh! Spare me!"

"There is only one way in which you will be spared," said Franklin, severely.

"I'll do anything—anything, if you will only spare me, sir! Only tell me what you want—"

"Yes, you have shown yourself capable of doing anything," was the interruption from Miss Laurence.

"I'll arrange that you can be a witness against these rascals, and so get your own sentence lightened; that's the only mercy

you will get," Franklin informed. "What do you say to it?"

"I'll do it, sir; I'll gladly do it!"

"All right, then; get on your things and come with me."

He and Miss Laurence did not allow the woman to go out of their sight, and when she was ready for the street the young man took her away as a prisoner, and in due time she was locked up as she deserved.

The joy of the reunion between Vivia and Zita need not be pictured.

In the mean time Broadway Billy was carrying on his work, now aided by the police and guided by Happy Harry and Silent Seth.

Billy was now eager to find the way into that underground den into which he had had just a peep, knowing well enough the nature of the discovery which there awaited him.

He had three places in view, the houses in which Harry and Seth had separately been confined, and that in which Edward Franklin had so nearly lost his life, though he had little expectation that the latter would prove the opening way to the den.

The nearest was the one where Seth had been imprisoned, and that was the one visited first.

It was a surprise, and the police made a rich haul, but they did not accomplish the object they had in view.

The Irish girl who had freed Seth was among the number arrested, but a word from Seth to Billy secured her freedom. Seth questioned her, but was unable to learn anything of importance, and telling her who he was, and that now he had repaid the debt he owed her, she was allowed to go, happy enough at thus getting off so easily.

But, then, she was guiltless, and would have been liberated anyhow.

The next visit was to the place where Harry had been so long confined, and there also arrests were made.

"This is pay with interest on the debt of gratitude I owe you," Mom Brunner, remarked Happy Harry, when the old woman was arrested. "I'd like the satisfaction of taking a broom to you for about ten minutes, you old Jezebel."

Her only response to that was a wish that she had killed him when she had the chance.

But here, likewise, nothing was discovered toward the desired end.

It was shown clearly, though, that this Mom Brunner was a "fence," and the evidence of her guilt was not to be doubted.

Billy had the address of the house to which Franklin had been lured, but he did not believe anything would be discovered there further than he knew already, and while he was studying the matter a sudden thought came to him.

Was not the saloon of Hob Feeny the very place they wanted to find, after all.

He mentioned it to the police sergeant, and he agreed with him.

Thither they repaired, a thorough search of the premises was made, and at last the search was rewarded.

In a room at the top of the house was a trap-door, opening into a shaft that had been made in imitation of a chimney, and down which ran a ladder of iron, bolted together in sections.

Down this the searchers climbed, one after another, and at the bottom was revealed a chamber, in one side of which was set an iron door similar to the one Billy had discovered on the previous night. It was bolted, tight and fast, and seemed to defy their efforts to open.

CHAPTER XVI.

SQUARING ACCOUNTS.

THERE was no time then to stop to try delicate measures with the bolts and bars and locks, for all were too eager to learn what lay beyond.

One man was sent to get a sledge, or any

other heavy instrument he might be able to find, and while he was gone the others sat down in expectancy, talking the matter over.

Broadway Billy had just ended telling them about his adventure and his finding of another iron door, when a sound was heard somewhere beyond the door that now barred their progress, and it was a heavy clang like the closing of a similar door further away.

Immediately all became silent to listen, and in silence waited.

Presently another sound was heard, that of approaching footfalls beyond the door, and chains and bolts were heard to move.

With weapon drawn, Broadway Billy leaped to the door, and the others were at his back, and as soon as the door opened he caught hold of it and flung it wide, disclosing a couple of men about to come out.

Execrations escaped them, and they quickly blew out the lights they carried.

This availed them nothing, however, for Billy's party had plenty of light, and they were ordered to put up their hands and surrender.

There was no help for it, and this they did, much as it galled them, and were quickly handcuffed and rendered helpless; and about that time the man returned who had been sent for the sledge.

He carried a bar instead, but it was not needed now, and leaving two to guard the prisoners and the door, Billy and the others set forward to explore the place and learn what secrets it might hold. A task that was speedily and satisfactorily accomplished.

It was, in fact, a counterfeiting den, as Billy had guessed, and one that had evidently been doing considerable mischief.

Who can say how many such are hidden under the shadows in mighty Gotham?

It was taken charge of by the police, the Federal authorities were notified, and on the following morning a thorough cleaning out was made and the place destroyed.

Hob Feeny was a member of the band, and was induced to reveal the names of all the others, and the arrests robbed high society of more than one of its shining lights. It was a greater victory than Broadway Billy had dreamed of when he agreed to take Miss Laurence's case.

When the case against Burk Burret and Job Heron was heard, one of the most dastardly of rascally schemes was clearly proved.

The child, Zita, was heiress to an immense fortune, but in case of her death this fortune was to go to her uncle, Burk Burret. This was known to Job Heron, one of the child's guardians.

He it was who first proposed to Burk Burret what a good thing it would be if he, Burk, could come in for the wealth, and finally he proposed that they together should undertake to remove the heiress in order to bring this about. Heron, of course, was to come in for a big share himself.

Burk agreed, providing Zita was not killed, and this made the plan ten times more difficult. It would have been a comparatively easy matter to have had some accident happen to the child, by which she would be removed and no one be held under suspicion; but when it came to passing off another body for hers, there was the difficulty.

It was a long time before the thing could be brought into anything like working order. The substitute body had to be provided, first of all, and it required the constant watching of the persons concerned to find just such a body as they needed for their purpose. At last, however, one was found, and then came the stealing of Zita and her detainment, and after that the finding of the body clad in her clothes.

The woman, Susan Coolidge, had been one who had recognized it positively, as she was in a measure in the scheme and was being well paid for her part. It was she who apprised the leading rascals of the fact that

Miss Laurence had suspicions that it was not Zita's body, and when Miss Laurence declared her intention of going to the detective, Broadway Billy, it was the same woman who told Heron, so was laid the plan for putting Billy out of the way before he could have time to do anything against the success of their venture.

Previous to this had been the arrest of Burret, and his hearing, at which he had been able to prove the clearest kind of *alibi*, and this had lulled suspicions so that nothing stood in the way of the success of the evil scheme. When Broadway Billy was called into the play, however, and they moved against him, then had come the beginning of their downfall, and the chief means in bringing their crime down upon their own heads with terrific force. It had been a big risk, but the fortune to be gained was a grand one, and this had made them all the more desperately eager to make sure of it.

Nor were these arrests all.

There had been the surprising arrest of Amson Prettyman, and the charge against him was much more of a surprise.

It was established by proof, however, and the house of Bigwell & Granson lost one of its most important—self-important—members. But it is needless to say there was no mourning for him!

Harper Heron tried to get out of any share in the great matter, but that was in vain, for Broadway Billy had by this time sifted the thing to the very bottom, and not only he, but several others indirectly interested, were brought to grief on account of it.

Never, the court declared, had such a heartless piece of villainy come under notice, and the heaviest sentence possible was given in every case, save alone that of Susan Coolidge, who was left off with a few months less than the full penalty for her dastardly crime.

Broadway Billy and his invincibles were given great praise for the work they had so well accomplished.

Billy was handsomely rewarded, and promptly gave the youthful aides their fair proportion of the returns from the result of excellent work.

Later on, that Billy was best man at a quiet wedding, goes without saying.

When Harry and Seth had done comparing notes they agreed that it had been about the toughest time they had ever had.

But, they were ready for more of the same, any time, they declared, and now that their detective wings were beginning to get strength they didn't care how often they were called upon to try them.

"Christopher Columbia, yes!" was Harry's way of expressing it. "We're here on tap for any sort of a pizen diffikilty that wants to show up, and I'll bet we are bound to come out right-side-up-with-care every time. We got a double dose that time, but we got there just the same, you bet!"

To which Silent Seth silently agreed, while Billy himself wound the whole matter up with:

"We gave them a broadsider that time, boys, even if it did look dubious for us for awhile, and we've got our guns cocked and primed for the next batch of rogues we run up against. We are in the field in earnest, and if we can't carve our names somewhere it will be because we can't spell a-b-l-e. We must try to keep the old banner waving; sweet pertaters, yes!"

THE END.

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